HERNANDO COUNTY

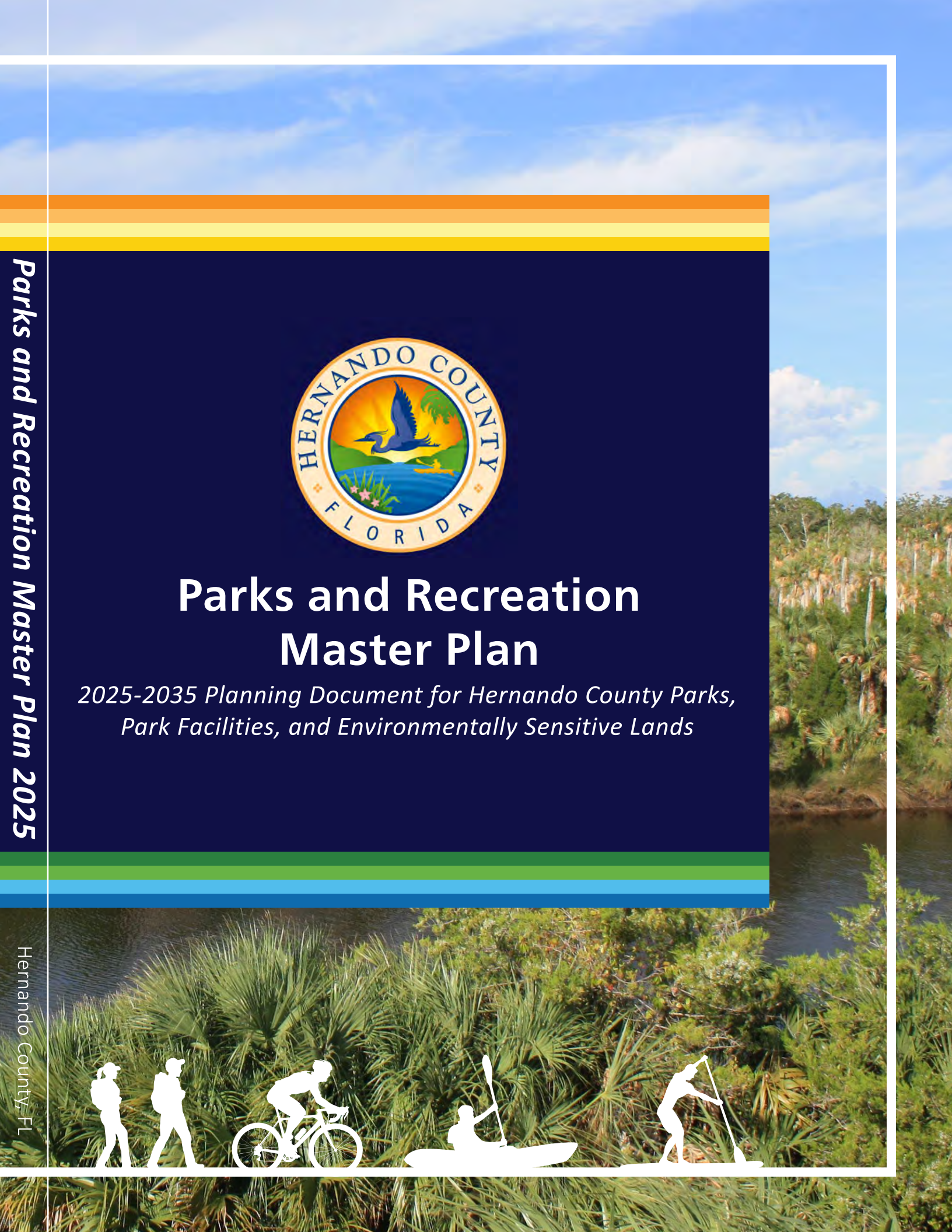
LOVE YOUR PARKS

Kimley»Horn

Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2025

# Parks and Recreation Master Plan

*2025-2035 Planning Document for Hernando County Parks, Park Facilities, and Environmentally Sensitive Lands*



Hernando County, FL

Parks and Recreation Department

# Mission Statement

***The Hernando County Parks & Recreation Department is dedicated to providing a quality park system and leisure activities for all our citizens. We strive to offer residents and visitors opportunities for recreation and improvement of physical and mental well-being, through programs and services that enhance their quality of life.***

***Our primary goal is to provide safe, clean and functional parks and recreation facilities, and to assist in the planning and development of new and improved facilities to meet the continued growth within the County.***

***We are committed to fulfilling our mission through visionary leadership, individual dedication, and the responsible use of available resources.***

# Special Thanks

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed their time, expertise and resources to make this report possible. The support of the residents of Hernando County, the County Commissioners Board, Parks and Recreation Department, elected officials and all stakeholders has been critical to the development of this guide for the future of Hernando County.

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Parks and Recreation Master Plan

# Introduction

## Purpose

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a comprehensive initiative designed to guide the future development, enhancement, and management of the County's parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces. This plan aims to address the evolving needs of Hernando County's growing population while promoting social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality. By aligning with community values and priorities, the plan seeks to create a vibrant, accessible, and inclusive parks system that enhances the quality of life for all residents.

*Ridge Manor*

A critical component of this master plan is the Needs Assessment, which serves as the foundation for informed decision-making. This assessment evaluates current park conditions, identifies gaps in services, and anticipates future demands based on demographic trends, community feedback, and best practices in recreation planning. Public involvement has been central to this process, ensuring that the voices of residents, stakeholders, and visitors are reflected in the plan's recommendations. Through surveys, focus groups, public meetings, and stakeholder interviews, the County has gathered valuable insights into challenges such as aging infrastructure, overcrowded facilities, and funding limitations while also identifying opportunities for growth and innovation.

The plan also emphasizes addressing key priorities such as improving accessibility for underserved populations, expanding recreational offerings like sports fields and nature-based activities, and fostering partnerships to enhance funding and resources. By integrating these findings into a cohesive strategy, Hernando County aims to develop a parks system that not only meets current needs but also anticipates future growth while preserving its unique cultural and natural heritage.

Ultimately, this master plan will serve as a roadmap for creating sustainable park spaces that support community health, foster social connections, protect the environment, and contribute to Hernando County's economic development and future growth.

*Jenkins Creek*

## The Benefits of Recreation and Parks

### Promoting Physical and Mental Health

Hernando County's parks provide residents with opportunities for physical activity, such as walking trails, sports fields, and kayaking, which help reduce the risk of chronic diseases. These natural spaces also offer tranquil environments that support mental well-being by reducing stress and promoting relaxation.

### Enhancing Environmental Sustainability

The County's parks play a vital role in protecting natural resources. They help manage stormwater runoff, preserve wildlife habitats, and mitigate climate impacts by reducing urban heat and absorbing carbon emissions.

### Providing Economic Benefits

Hernando County's parks attract visitors who contribute to the local economy through spending on activities, dining, and accommodations. Parks also create jobs in recreation, maintenance, and tourism while supporting local businesses.

### Fostering Social Cohesion

Parks serve as community gathering spaces where residents can connect through events, sports, and recreational programs. These spaces promote inclusivity and a sense of belonging across diverse age groups and backgrounds.

### Preserving Cultural and Environmental Heritage

Hernando County's parks celebrate local history and traditions by hosting cultural events and preserving natural landmarks. They provide spaces for residents to honor the County's unique identity while fostering cultural awareness.

### Increasing Property Values Without Displacement

Parks enhance nearby property values by creating attractive communities while ensuring equitable access for all residents. Hernando County prioritizes inclusive planning to avoid displacement and ensure that all benefit from improved recreational spaces.

### Promoting Tourism

Hernando County's unique geographic location on Florida's nature coast, and area of protected State lands including Weeki Wachee Springs and the Withlacoochee State Forest, draw tourists from across the region. The County and State Parks boost the local economy by encouraging spending on outdoor activities and accommodations.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

# Needs Assessment

# Guiding Documents

## Overview

This section highlights adopted planning documents with outlined parks, recreation, and open space goals. These documents identify priorities and long term goals that influence this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Several reports and plans were reviewed at the initiation and implementation stages. The following are summarized in this section:

- 2040 Hernando County Comprehensive Plan
- Brooksville Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Hernando/Citrus Bikeways and Trail Master Plan
- South Brooksville Plan
- Anderson Snow Park Master Plan

## Key Takeaways

- **Hernando County is experiencing steady population growth, with ongoing development and redevelopment to accommodate this expansion.**
- **The South Brooksville Plan and Brooksville Park Master Plan are two initiatives focused on enhancing community centers and parks to improve quality of life.**
- **Efforts are focused on enhancing existing parks, promoting bike tourism, and leveraging trail networks like the Good Neighbor Trail to attract visitors and foster community engagement.**
- **Hernando County is improving infrastructure, managing community needs, and boosting local revenue through tourism, with notable successes like the Mermaid Trail.**

*Linda Pedersen Park*

# 2040 Hernando County Comprehensive Plan

The 2040 Hernando County Comprehensive Plan identifies the need to create and maintain a County-wide master plan for parks, park facilities, and open space. This document defines park classifications, level of service goals, ideal funding structure, and park design priorities to support a diverse parks system that meets the needs of the growing population. Goals, objectives, and strategies described are included with more detail in Chapter 7 of the Comprehensive Plan.

## Park Classifications:

The Comprehensive Plan defines park classification standards by park size, location, and recreation type: passive or active.

**Regional Parks:** These parks are over 100 acres and maintained by state and federal entities. This may include, but is not limited to: Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, Withlacoochee State Forest, and Weeki Wachee Preserve

**District Parks:** Over 40 acres, accessible, with multiple active recreation facilities.

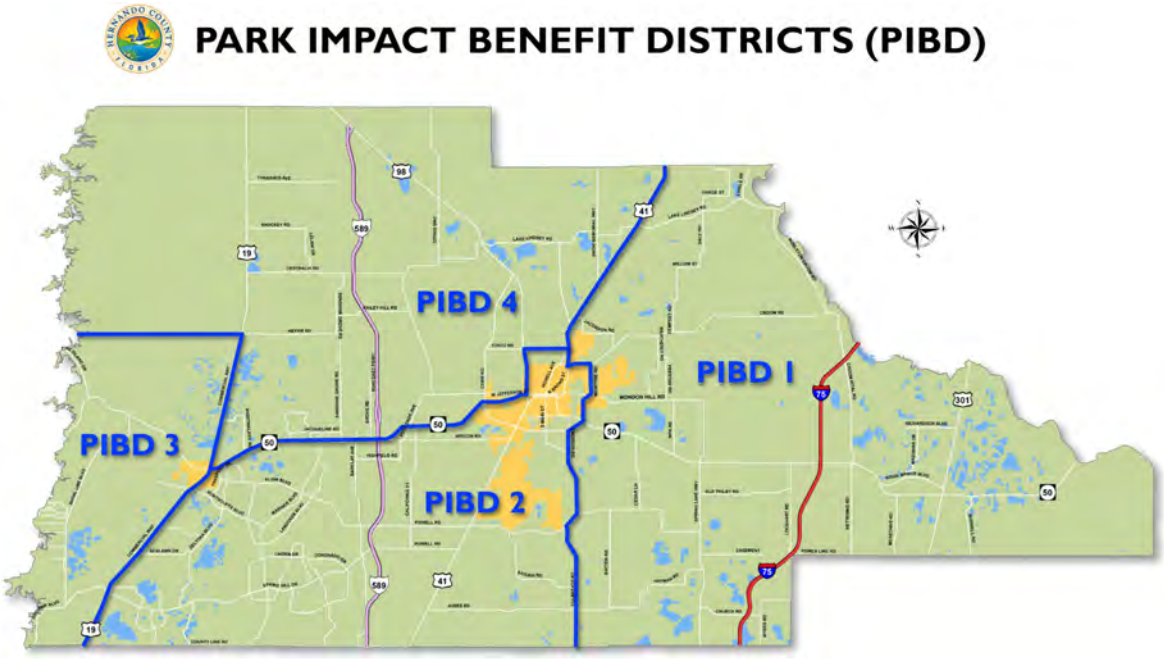
**Community Parks:** At least 20 acres, accessible by bike or foot, with several active facilities.

**Neighborhood Parks:** Smaller, privately managed parks within neighborhoods.

**Preserves:** Protected areas under the Environmentally Sensitive Lands program.

## Level of Service (LOS):

- **Acreage LOS:** 2 acres of active recreation parks per 1,000 residents, an additional 2 acres of passive recreation and open space per 1,000 County residents
- **Access LOS:** At least one district or community park located and maintained in each park impact benefit district.




*Map A1: Park Impact Benefit Districts*

## Funding:

Hernando County should pursue opportunities for alternative funding and partnerships for the advancement and diversification of the parks system. Alternative funding may include:

- Grant funding
- Private/corporate funding
- User fees
- Private maintenance contracts
- Public-private partnerships
- Community volunteer program

## Park Design:

Parks will be designed as community focal points with attractive accessibility and functionality following incorporating the following design features:

- **Design Standards:** Hernando County should utilize design standards for parks that enhance them as community focal points by
  - Providing attractive low impact design maximizing efficient drainage and promoting green space
  - Encouraging direct bicycle and pedestrian connections
  - Coordinating access options with nearby transit access
  - Prioritizing diverse, safe, and convenient access options to district and community parks
- **Special Needs:** Hernando County should accommodate the special needs of physically and mentally impaired residents in Hernando County by
  - Prioritizing ADA compliance in design, upgrades, and retrofitting of parks
  - Determining recreation programs for groups with physical or mental disabilities or limitations
  - Collaborating with schools, County Libraries, and community groups
- **Waterways Access:** encourage access to and responsible enjoyment of waterway resources including rivers, springs, bays and the Gulf of Mexico by
  - Expanding, enhancing and maintaining boat ramps, kayak launches, public docks and other facilities where feasible at parks and other popular boating destinations.
  - Prioritizing access to water facilities that should be designed using low-impact development and Florida Department of Environmental Protection Clean Marina standards.
  - Developing and implementing a blueways water-access trail system for paddle crafts consistent with the Nature Coast segment of the Florida Saltwater Paddling Trail
  - Promoting and market the Coast to Coast Connector multi-use trail as a major recreation and tourism asset and ensure the consistency of development initiatives with Trail objectives and standards.

*Rogers Park Boat Launch*

# Brooksville Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Brooksville, Florida is the only incorporated municipality in Hernando County with a population of over 9,000 in 2023 with 110+ acres of City Parks across five sites and 2.6+ miles of the Good Neighbor Trail within Brooksville limits. The Brooksville Park Master Plan, adopted in January 2023, outlines goals for the next 20 years to keep up with the anticipated population projection of 25,000 by 2043.

Recommendations of the plan outline goals to expand the park system by 150+ acres and expand the multi-use trail system by 8.7+miles. These additional facilities include 12 additional parks, including three community parks and nine neighborhood parks, development of sports tourism program, and build upon Brownsville's Trail Town designation, as a community on the existing Good Neighbor Trail. Recommendations are structured around a phased strategy with an estimated cost of $100 million over the next 20 years.

Planned improvements to existing Brooksville Parks include adding family-oriented amenities such as an upgraded Event Center and Ball Fields at Kennedy Park, and creating an enhanced event space with an amphitheater at Quarry Park. The plan also suggests upgrading the Jerome Brown Recreation Center and integrating additional racket sports. Sensory recreation activities, including community gardens and yoga, are proposed to promote wellness.

Brooksville's vision for the future looks toward a park system where parks are accessible, inclusive, and thriving, fostering community, health, well-being, and connection among residents.

Since the Brooksville Park Master Plan adoption, there have been changes to the two County Parks within Brooksville limits. Hernando Park has since been sold to the City of Brooksville, and Kennedy Park has been renamed Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park at it's reopening following playground and park improvements in March 2025.

Hernando County is referenced in the Brooksville Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a partner to provide large passive recreation facilities, library resources, coordination of County park programming, and planning partner to coordinate planning and development of future Hernando County and City of Brooksville parks and trails.

*Map A2: Brooksville System wide Parks and Trails*

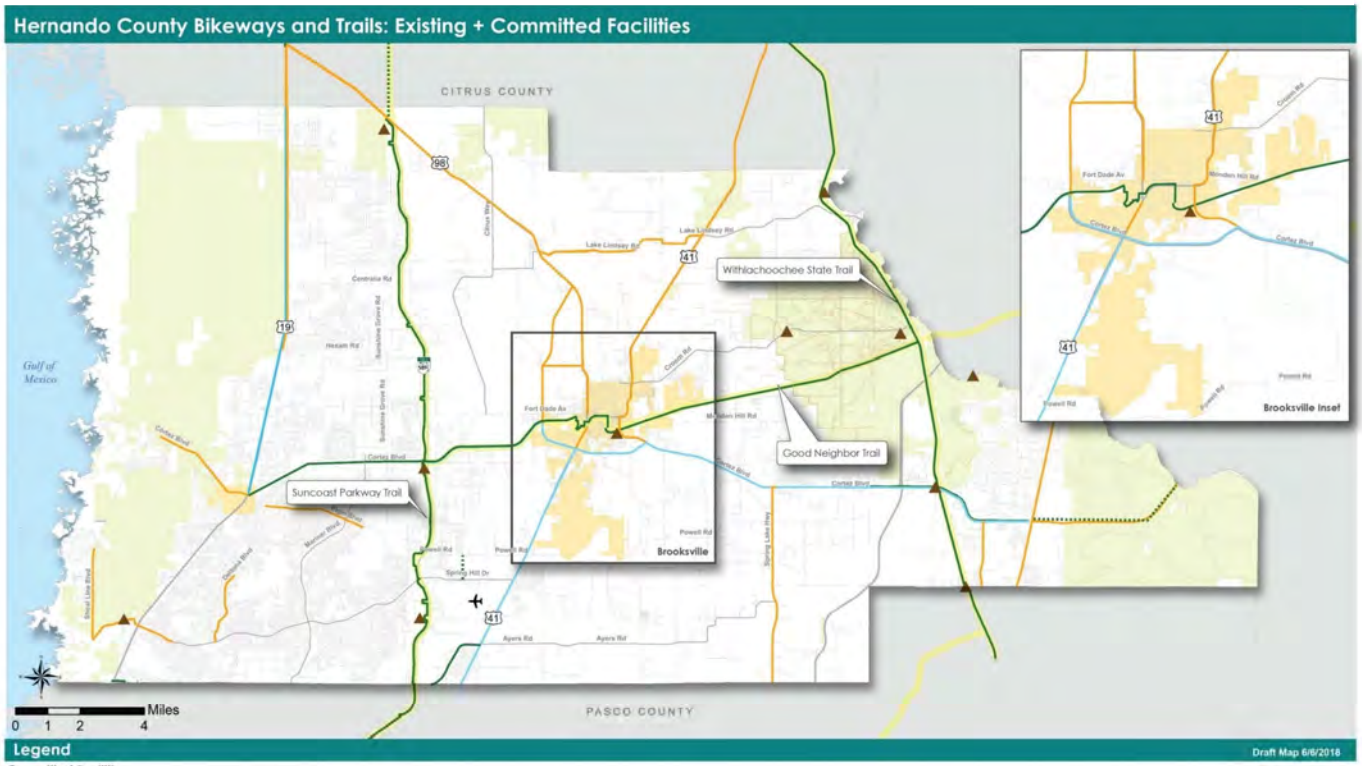
# Hernando/Citrus Bikeways and Trail Master Plan

The Hernando/Citrus Bikeways and Trail Master Plan, adopted 2018, focuses on enhancing and connecting existing trail facilities in the region. Facilities through Hernando County include:

- **Good Neighbor Trail:** A 10-mile trail connecting Brooksville to the Withlacoochee State Trail, serving as a crucial link in the Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail.
- **Withlacoochee State Trail:** A significant trail that offers extensive recreational opportunities.
- **Suncoast Parkway Trail:** A 42-mile trail spanning Hillsborough, Pasco, and Hernando counties, providing safe and convenient access for biking and wildlife observation.

These trails not only promote outdoor recreation but also contribute to the region's These trails not only promote outdoor recreation but also contribute to the region's connectivity and conservation efforts.

*Greenway Trail*




*Map A3: Existing and Committed Bikeways and Trails Facilities in Hernando County (2018–2023)*

# South Brooksville Plan

The South Brooksville Plan outlines a vision for future planning and programming. Key aspects include:

## Parks, Recreation, and Programming

The Community Center provides a variety of indoor and outdoor facilities that support recreational, educational, and wellness activities for all age groups.

**Community Center Overview:**

- Indoor Facilities
- Gymnasium
- Aquatic center and splash pad
- Wellness center
- Event center with kitchen and classrooms
- Chapel
- Skating rink

**Outdoor Facilities:**

- Playground designed by a local artist
- Fitness circuit
- Sports courts: basketball, dodge ball, outdoor hockey, pickleball, tennis
- Neighborhood garden space
- Open pavilions for gatherings and events
- Access
- Connected to Kennedy Park via crosswalk

**Programs:**

- Senior and youth programming
- Music, health, and wellness activities

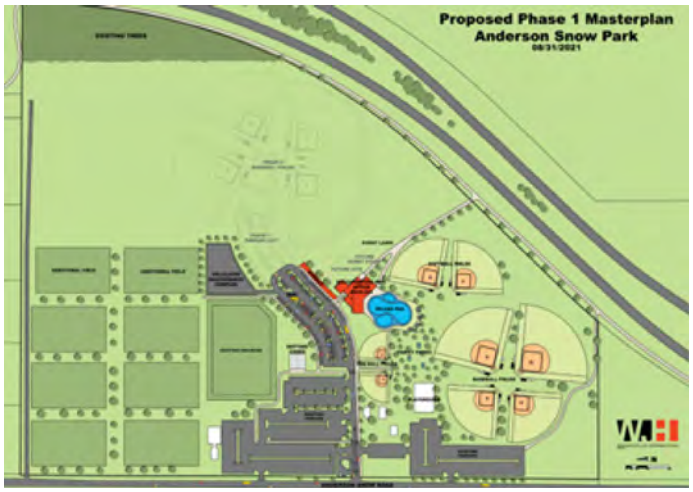
These amenities play an important role in a community's parks and recreation system by supporting physical activity, social engagement, and access to inclusive programs. They contribute to overall community well-being, provide space for structured programming, and help meet the diverse needs of residents.

## South Brooksville Survey and Community Needs

The survey revealed that most respondents have lived in South Brooksville for less than a year. Key community needs include addressing trash and connectivity issues. All respondents supported the addition of a community center in South Brooksville. The parks were generally considered "good," with respondents highlighting the importance of parks, fishing, and outdoor activities.

# Anderson Snow Park

Anderson Snow Park is strategically connected to the Suncoast Trail, a 42-mile multi-use trail that offers extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation and connectivity. Additionally, a Needs and Assessment Report was completed by the FSU Planning & Development Lab in 2020. This report incorporated valuable public engagement feedback, providing insights into community needs and preferences.




*Map A4: Anderson Snow Park Master Plan*

# Demographic Analysis

## Overview

Demographic trends can provide valuable insights for long-range planning purposes by helping to identify shifts in population, age distribution, and other key factors that can impact a communities needs and priorities. Analysis of population increases or decreases, as well as evaluation of age distribution, can help the County anticipate changes in demand for recreation, programming or amenities. By examining demographic trends, Hernando County can be better situated to understand future challenges and opportunities they may face. This information can aid in developing more effective strategies to meet the needs of residents.

## Population Growth

Hernando County has experienced steady growth, with a 12.59% population increase from 172,778 in 2010 to 194,515 in 2020. Growth has continued through 2024, with estimates reaching 209,629, and projections anticipate an additional 13,000 residents by 2029. Long-term forecasts from the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) present low, medium, and high growth scenarios **(Figure B1)**, with the medium-growth model indicating consistent annual increases through 2050 being viewed as the most accurate reflection of current trends.

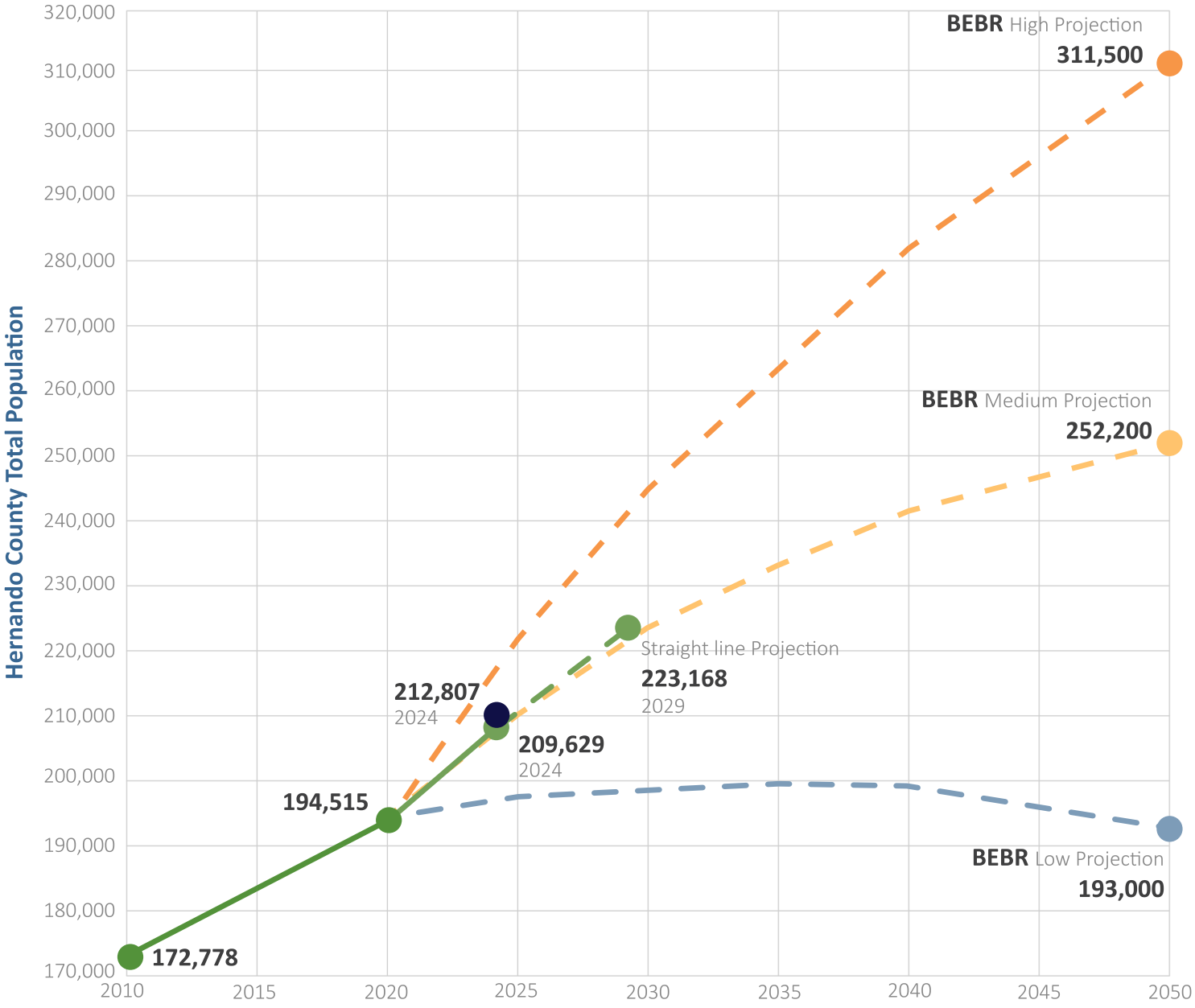
## Daytime Population

The County sees a daytime population of approximately 200,000 **(Figure B2)**, including approximately 66,000 workers and 124,000 residents. This active daytime presence supports ongoing economic activity and informs planning for services, infrastructure, and recreation.

## Key Takeaways

- **Hernando County has seen steady population growth, increasing by over 12% between 2010 and 2020, with projections showing continued growth through 2050.**
- **Adults aged 20-54 represent the largest demographic, while the youth population (ages 0-9) remains the smallest.**
- **Urban areas like Brooksville and Spring Hill have higher population densities, requiring accessible parks and green spaces.**
- **Income diversity across the County underscores the importance of affordable and equitable recreational opportunities for all residents.**
- **36% of households reported having at least 1 individual with disabilities in their home, which is 8% higher than the state average. Future park designs should prioritize accessibility and inclusivity to serve all community members.**
- **High rates of internet access (92.8%) provide opportunities to engage residents online for surveys, program promotion, and feedback, ensuring parks align with community needs effectively.**

*Figure B1: Historical and Projected Population Trends for Hernando County*



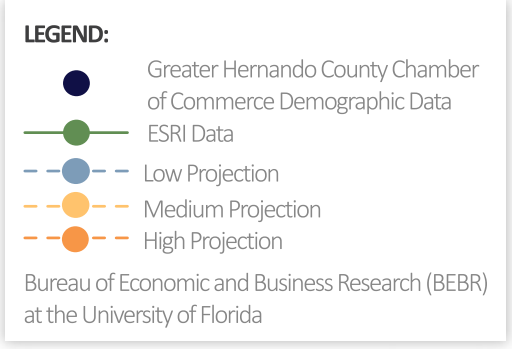
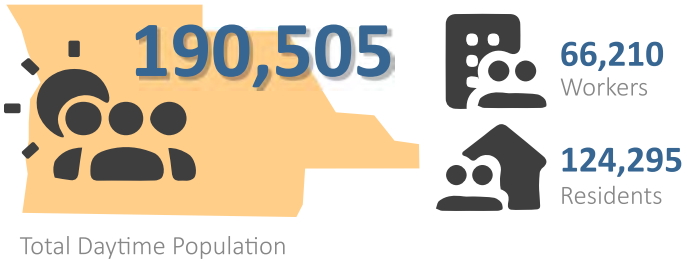




*Figure B2: Total Daytime Population*



# Age

Age demographics in Hernando County provide key guidance for future park and recreation planning. Residents aged 20–54 have consistently made up the largest share of the population since 2010, a trend projected to continue through 2030 **(Figure B4)**. As of 2024, the median age is 49.9, about 6.4% higher than Florida's state median of 43.5 **(Figure B3)**, though the gap is narrowing by approximately 1% per decade. The 0–9 age group remains the smallest demographic and is expected to remain so through 2030. This age distribution underscores the importance of aligning future recreation programming with the County's evolving population profile.

*Figure B3: Median Age*

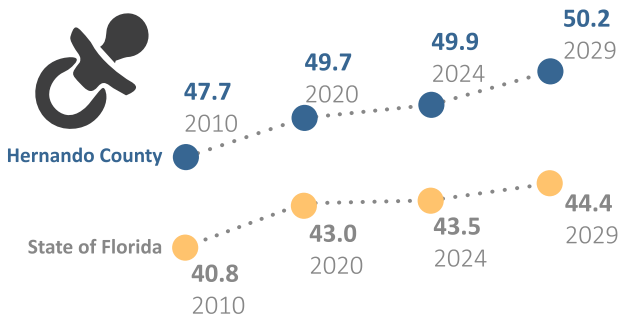
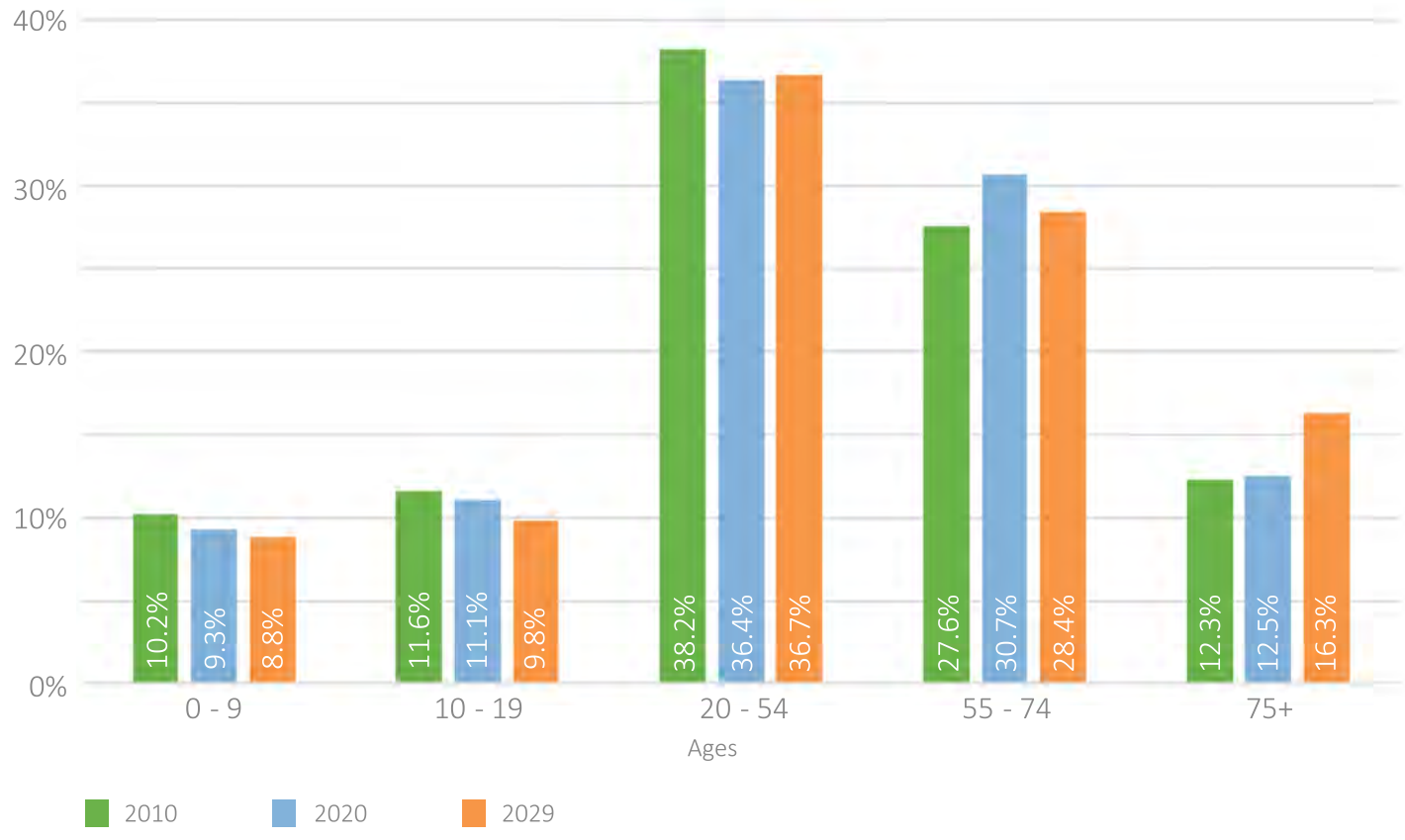



*Figure B4: Population by Age*



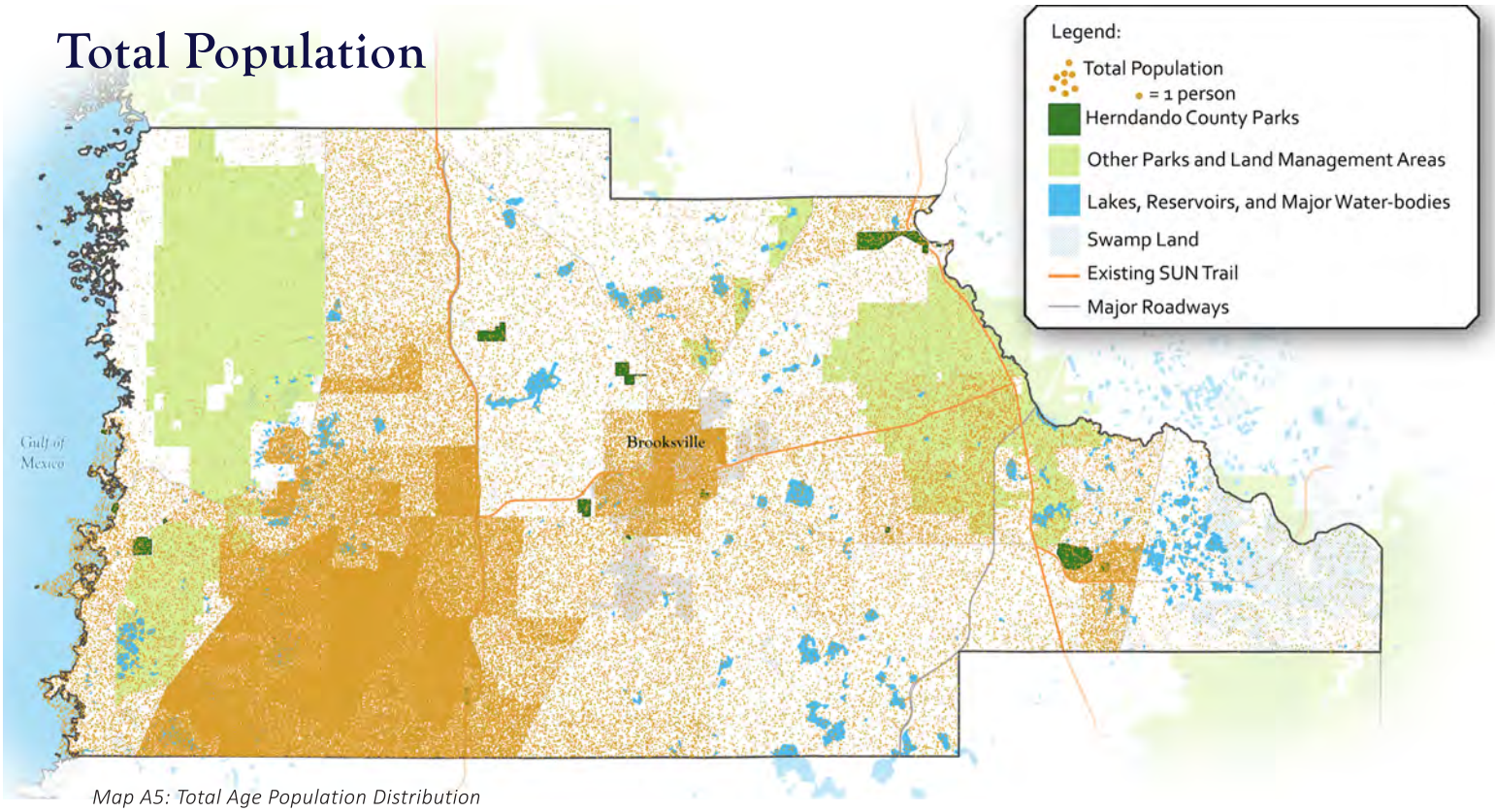
# Age Population Distribution

Understanding age distribution through dot density mapping can help visualize where specific age groups are concentrated in Hernando County, providing a valuable tool for planning parks and open spaces. This demographic information allows facilities to be designed so that they reflect the distinct needs of residents by:

- Designing age-appropriate play spaces for children, including equipment that supports physical development, imaginative play, and safe exploration in open areas.
- Prioritizing senior-friendly amenities, such as shaded walking paths, rest areas with benches, well-lit routes, and spaces that support low-impact group activities and socialization.
- Creating designated teen spaces, like skate parks, sport courts, or hangout areas that promote independence, encourage active recreation, and support peer interaction.
- Incorporating intergenerational spaces, such as picnic areas, mixed-use trails, or game areas, that allow individuals and families of all ages to gather, interact, and engage in shared activities.
- Using community input throughout the planning process, ensuring that park features reflect real needs and preferences, while building public support and encouraging long-term usage.

When demographic mapping is combined with geographic data and public engagement; Hernando County can create a parks system that is adaptable, inclusive, and aligned with changing population patterns—ultimately fostering stronger, more connected communities.

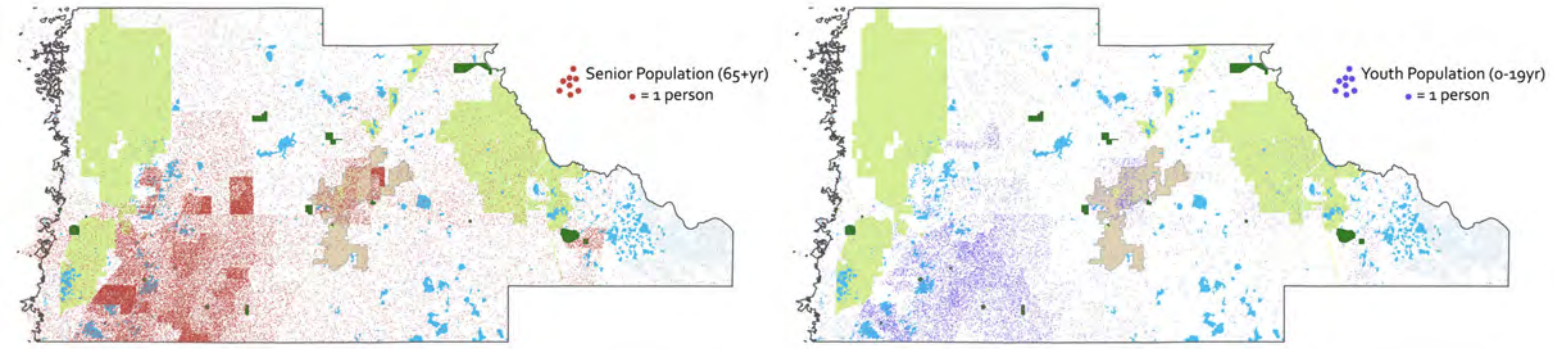
## Total Population




*Map A5: Total Age Population Distribution*

## Senior Population Distribution

## Youth Population Distribution




*Map A6: Senior and Youth Population Distribution*

In Hernando County, where senior population outnumbers the youth population, parks can be thoughtfully designed to cater to the diverse needs of all age groups. For seniors, parks should prioritize accessibility and activities that encourage physical activity and social engagement. Features such as walking paths with shaded seating, outdoor fitness equipment tailored to varying mobility levels, and spaces for group activities can promote health, wellbeing and community interaction of residents.

For the youth population, parks should still include engaging play areas with age-appropriate equipment such as climbing structures, swings, and interactive elements. Teen-friendly zones like skate parks or sports courts can also provide spaces for socialization and recreation. To encourage inclusivity and intergenerational interaction, multi-use areas such as picnic spots, mixed-use trails, and family-friendly games can bring different age groups together, creating a sense of community.

## Race and Ethnicity

Hernando County's racial and ethnic composition has evolved over recent years, reflecting Florida's increasing diversity. **Figure B5** is a race and ethnicity diagram that breaks down the density of the African-American, Asian, Hispanic/ Latino, and White populations in Hernando County.

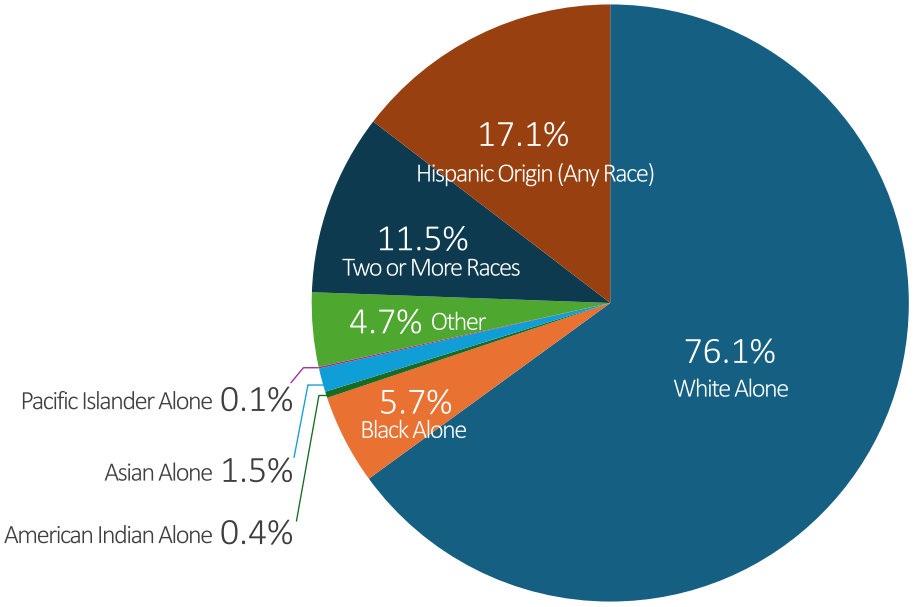



*Figure B5: 2024 Race and Ethnicity*

# Household Demographics

Hernando County's income data, based on the 2020 Census, reflects a varied economic landscape. **Figures B7, B9, and B11** show both a diverse income range and indicators of income disparity. Projections suggest gradual economic growth in the coming years, which may influence recreational planning and accessibility.

- Median household income (2020): $65,341; projected to increase by 16% by 2029
- Per capita income (2020): $35,468; projected to increase by 15% by 2029
- Average household size **(Figure B8)**: Typically two or fewer people
- Family households report higher median incomes than non-family households

These variations in income and household composition highlight the importance of offering a variety of affordable, inclusive park amenities and programs. Addressing these differences ensures that all residents—regardless of income or household type—have equitable access to recreational opportunities.

*Figure B8: 2020 Household by Size*

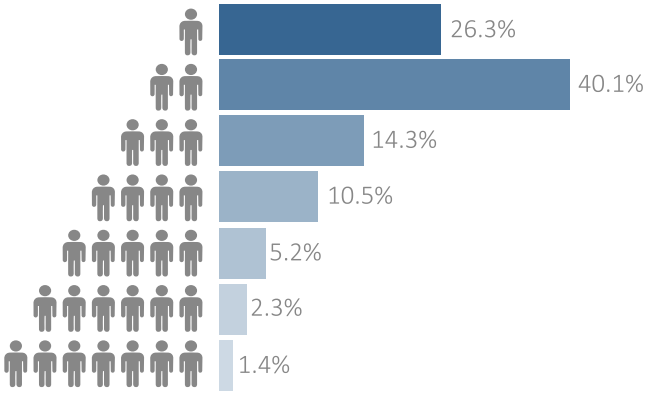



*Figure B7: Households by Income*

| Households by Income | 2024 Percent of Population | 2029 Percent of Population |
|---|---|---|
| <$15,000 | 10.3% | 8.6% |
| $15,000 - $24,999 | 6.4% | 4.7% |
| $25,000 - $34,999 | 8.6% | 6.9% |
| $35,000 - $49,999 | 13.0% | 10.9% |
| $50,000 - $74,999 | 17.0% | 16.2% |
| $75,000 - $99,999 | 15.4% | 16.1% |
| $100,000 - $149,999 | 17.7% | 21.0% |
| $150,000 - $199,999 | 6.2% | 8.6% |
| $200,000+ | 5.5% | 7.0% |
| **Average Household Income** | **$86,485** | **$101,723** |

# Household Demographics

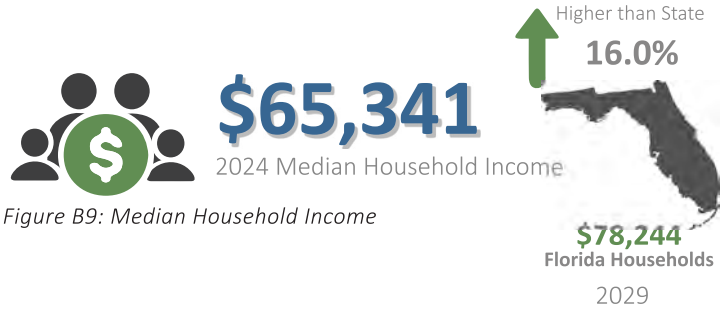



*Figure B9: Median Household Income*

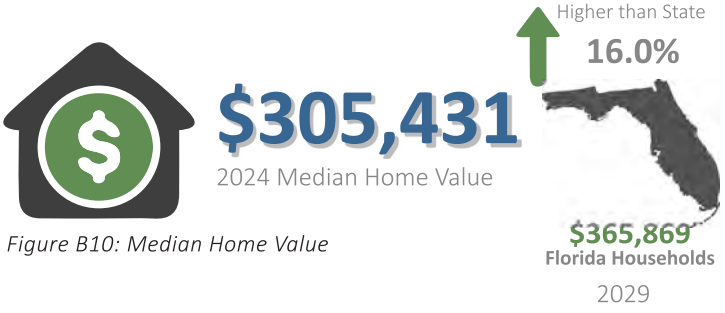



*Figure B10: Median Home Value*

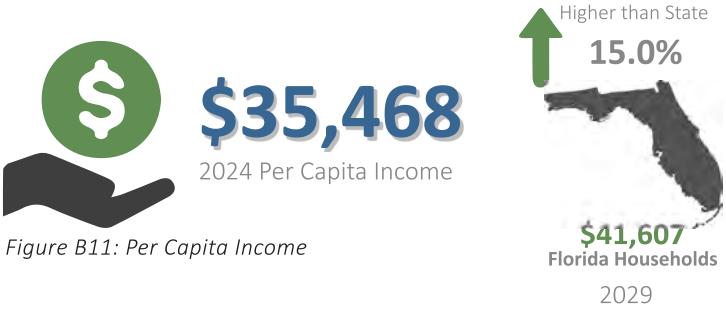



*Figure B11: Per Capita Income*

Hernando County's 2020 Census data provides insights into housing, population distribution, and homeownership trends that influence parks and recreation planning. Most residents live in urban areas, with a large percentage owning their homes—factors that suggest both the potential for long-term community investment and the need for balanced recreational access across different environments.

- **Total households:** Nearly 100,000
- **Occupancy breakdown:** 73% owner-occupied, 17% renter-occupied, 9.6% vacant (Figure B12)
- **Population distribution:** 79.9% urban, 20.1% rural (Figure B13)
- **Median home value (2020):** $305,431; projected to rise 16% to $365,869 by 2029

Understanding these household characteristics can help guide where and how parks should be developed. Urban areas may require more compact, accessible green spaces, while rural zones benefit from preserving natural landscapes. As home values rise, shifting socioeconomic dynamics may also affect the types of recreational amenities communities seek.

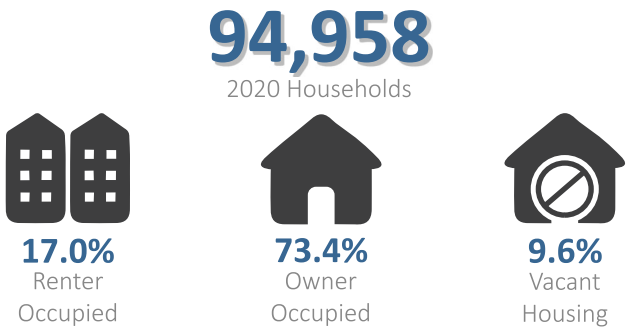



*Figure B12: 2020 Households*

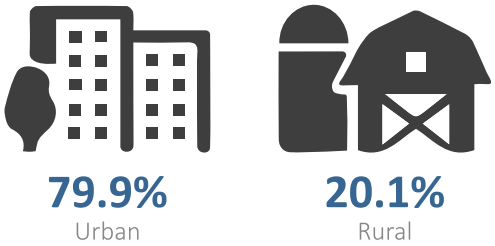



*Figure B13: 2020 Population by Urban/Rural Status*

Hernando County shows strong digital access and connectivity, which presents significant opportunities for enhancing community engagement in parks and recreation planning. With most households connected online and equipped with computers, digital tools can be effectively used to gather feedback, share information, and promote programs.

- **Internet access:** 92.8% of households (1% above the state average)
- **Computer access:** 97.2% of households **(Figure B16)**
- **SNAP/food stamp use**: ~11,000 individuals, above the state average **(Figure B15)**
- **Disability prevalence:** 36% of households include a person with a disability (10% higher than the state average, per **Figure B17)**

While digital engagement is highly feasible, socioeconomic challenges underscore the need for affordable or free recreation options. Additionally, the higher rate of residents living with disabilities highlights the importance of accessible, inclusive park design. Incorporating universal design and adaptive programs can ensure Hernando County's parks serve all residents equitably.

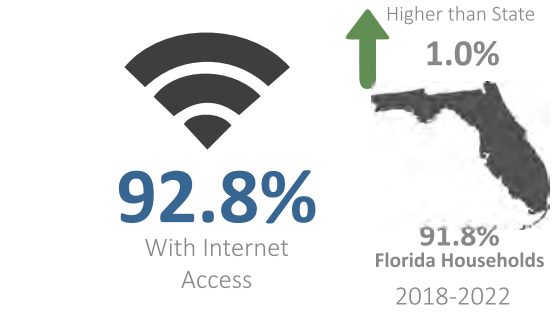



*Figure B14: Households With Internet Access*

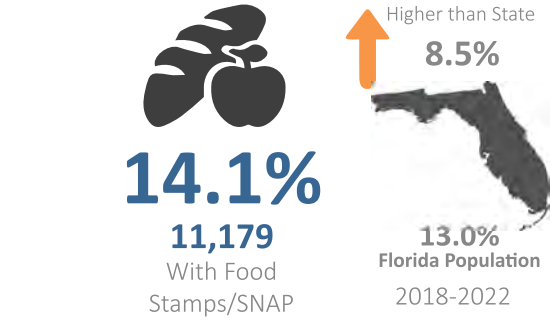



*Figure B15: Household with Food Stamps/SNAP*

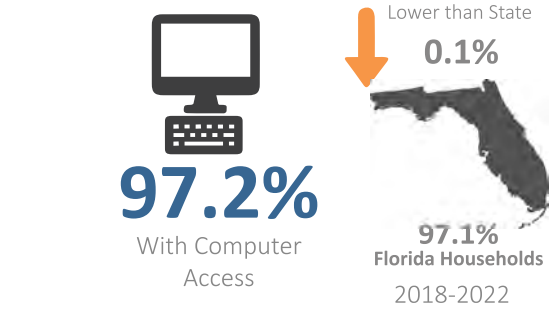



*Figure B16: Households With Computers*

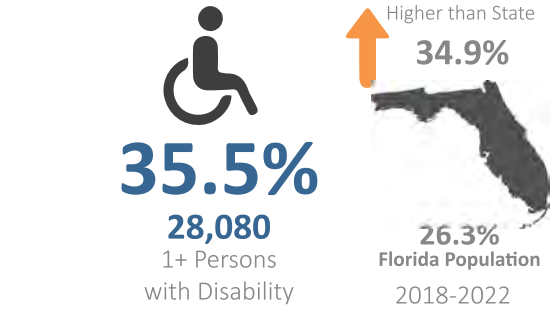



*Figure B17: Household with Disability Status*

# Inventory & Evaluation

## Overview

Park inventory and evaluations were completed as qualitative and quantitative inventories of existing park facilities. Park elements that are evaluated range from general maintenance quality to number and type of each amenity. Park scores can then be used to map park qualities and facilities across the County to understand trends in Quality Level of Service (LOS).

A total of 20 sites were visited across Hernando County on November 5th, 6th and 8th, 2024. These sites are categorized into specific classifications set by the Recreation & Open Space Chapter of the 2040 Hernando County Comprehensive Plan. Park classifications are determined by land use and park size. Hernando County park classifications include:

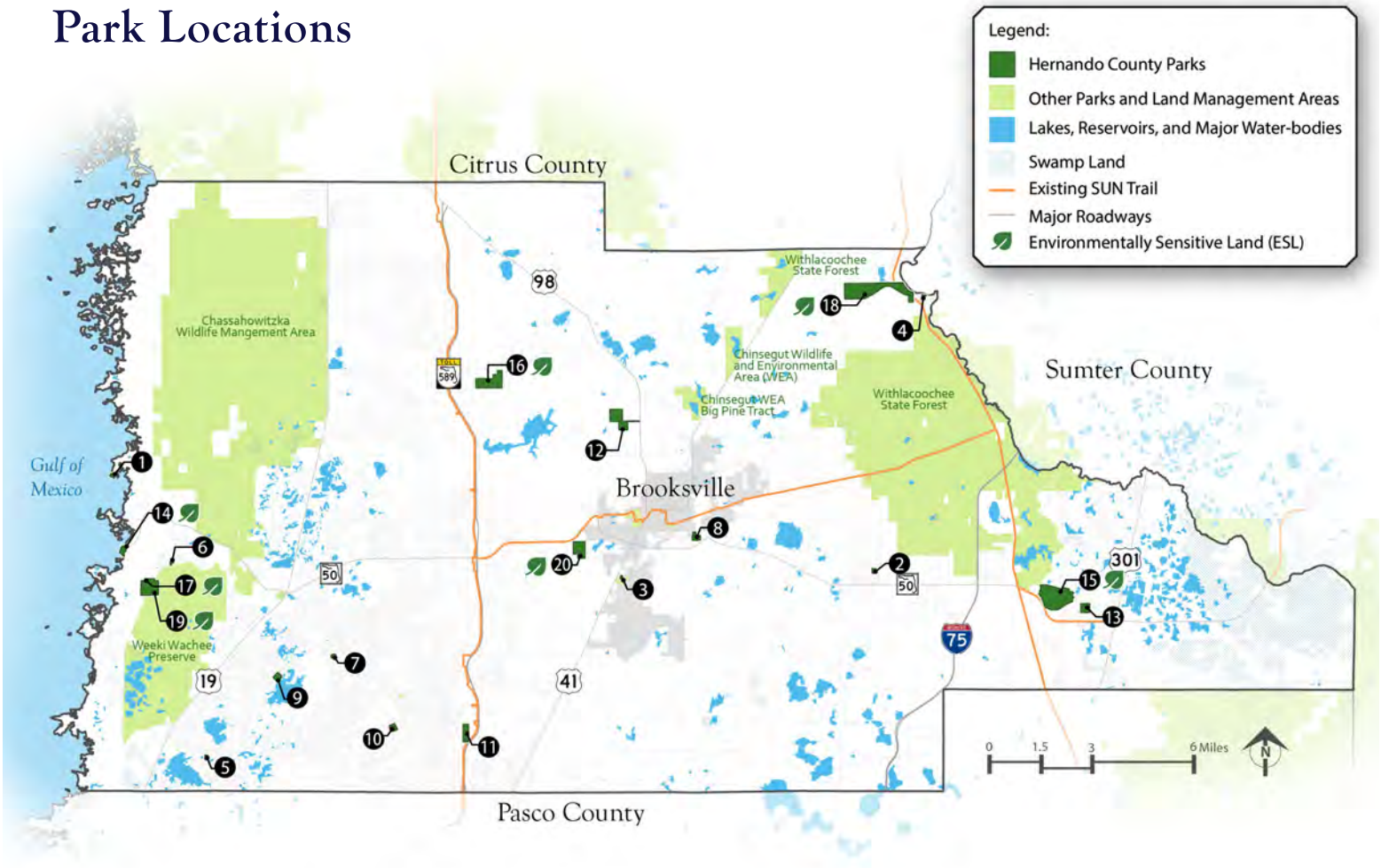
- Regional Parks
- District Parks
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Preserves/Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL)

*Hill 'N' Dale Park*

## Key Takeaways

- **The highest-scoring parks include Ridge Manor Community Park, Fickett Hammock Preserve, and Linda Pedersen Park, while the lowest-scoring parks are Nobleton Wayside Park, Pioneer Park Skate Complex, and Lonnie C. Coburn Park.**
- **The average park score is 63, indicating a moderate level of performance across the system with opportunities for improvement in areas like access and linkage.**
- **Mapping park scores visually highlights disparities and trends, aiding in strategic planning and resource allocation to address inequities and improve park quality.**
- **The assessment provides a foundation for targeted improvements, focusing on enhancing accessibility, upgrading outdated facilities, and implementing sustainable practices to elevate the overall quality of the park system.**
- **Park Evaluations were completed following the 2024 Hurricane season where many of the parks were impacted by Storms Helene and Milton. The storms did not impact the overall analysis and helped direct how sustainable/ resilient some of the existing park sites are.**

# Park Locations




*Map A7: Park Locations*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Hill N Dale Community Park
3. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
4. Nobleton Wayside Park
5. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
6. Rogers Park
7. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

8. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
9. Delta Woods Park
10. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

11. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
12. Ernie Wever Youth Park
13. Ridge Manor Community Park

## Preserves

14. Bayport Park
15. Cypress Lakes Preserve
16. Fickett Hammock Preserve
17. Jenkins Creek Park
18. Lake Townsen Preserve
19. Linda Pedersen Park
20. Peck Sink Preserve

According to Hernando County's 2018 Comprehensive Plan, the following park classifications are used as standards based on park size, location and recreation type:

A. Active recreation includes outdoor or indoor activities that involve physical activity to engage in competition or exercise including such facilities as athletic fields of any kind, courts (tennis, basketball, handball, etc.), gymnasiums, swimming pools, playgrounds, jogging and exercise trails;

B. Passive recreation includes outdoor activities that are based on/or dependent upon natural resources and may or may not involve physical activity such as walking and biking trails, nature centers, hunting, fishing, boating and canoeing. Passive recreation includes lands designated as preserves.

## Regional Parks:

Regional park and open space facilities are generally recognized as those lands in Hernando County located primarily within the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, the Withlacoochee State Forest, the Weeki Wachee Preserve and other state and federal owned preserve and recreation areas. Regional facilities generally involve over 100 acres and are maintained by state and federal entities.

## District Parks:

Hernando County District parks are:

- Generally 40 acres or larger in size;
- Accessible to the residents of the district(s) it is designed to serve;
- Designed to include five or more active recreation facilities of any type.

## Community Parks:

Hernando County Community parks are:

- Generally 20 acres or larger in size;
- Accessible to the residents of the surrounding community, accessible by bicycles and pedestrians;
- Designed to include three or more active recreation facilities of any type.

## Neighborhood Parks:

Hernando County requires a system of neighborhood and mini park type parks that are owned, developed and managed by private developers, neighborhood organizations, homeowners' associations and community groups. These types of parks are:

- Generally less than 20 acres in size;
- Have appropriate facilities designed to meet the recreation needs of the development;
- Provided by subdivisions, single family planned development projects and multi-family projects that include more than fifty dwelling units in accordance with the County land development regulations.

## Preserves:

Hernando County shall manage preserves under its Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) Program for the purpose of providing ecologically valuable open space that is also accessible for passive recreational and educational pursuits where appropriate.

# Evaluation Criteria

Park evaluations are an extension of a Quality LOS measurement. During an evaluation, each park's performance is rated across six categories and 40 topics. The final product provides a weighted score from 0-100, with 100 being the highest possible score. Park scores can then be mapped and geographically evaluated for neighborhood-level and County-wide trends. The criteria is intended to objectively observe parks both individually and as a system.

The criteria used is based in part on guidelines developed by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping communities create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. For each question, parks are assigned a rating based on observation at the time of the park visit. Ratings are based on a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing the lowest and 5 representing the highest. A rating of "n/a" indicates that the criteria was not applicable and is not included in final ratings.

*Pine Island*

*Peck Sink Preserve*

# Parks Evaluation

Ratings are based on observations made during a limited time period and are intended to provide information regarding trends for individual parks, trail heads, and lake access or across the system only. The following section details the scoring range of evaluations. The six categories of evaluation include Design & Construction, Effectiveness, Condition, Comfort & Image, Access & Linkage, Sustainability and overall Park Score Average.

**Exceeding Expectations**

Parks with scores in this category are defined as parks that have new or recently enhanced facilities or features, that are readily accessible through multiple modes of transportation, exhibit multiple features that enhance the comfort and experience of park users, and exhibit a maintenance quality that meets or exceeds standards of the city.

**Meeting Expectations**

Parks with scores in this category are defined as parks that have serviceable facilities or features providing functional recreational access for the public and are accessed primarily by vehicle with some connections to adjacent neighborhoods. These parks exhibit few features that enhance the comfort and experience of park users beyond a minimal recreational access capacity. They also exhibit a maintenance level sufficient for the uses in the park but may benefit from additional maintenance.

**Below Expectations**

Parks within this score category are generally defined as parks with facilities or features that have exceeded their functional life span and/or need enhancement or replacement to provide functional recreational access for the public. These parks exhibit few, if any, features that enhance the comfort and experience of park users and exhibit a maintenance level insufficient to continue to provide the desired uses and recreational access.

## Highest Scoring Parks

Ridge Manor Community Park

77

Fickett Hammock Preserve

72

Linda Pedersen Park

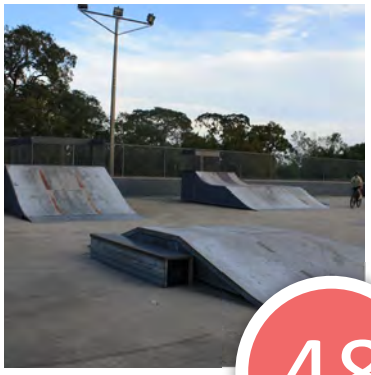
72

## Lowest Scoring Parks

Nobleton Wayside Park

39

Pioneer Park Skate Complex



48

Lonnie C. Coburn Park

50

**Design & Construction:** 64

**Effectiveness:** 68

**Condition:** 66

**Comfort & Image:** 64

**Access & Linkage:** 59

**Sustainability:** 63

**Park Score Average:** 64

The evaluation of parks across the system revealed notable trends in scoring, highlighting areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement. Among the highest-scoring parks were Ridge Manor Community Park, Fickett Hammock Preserve, and Linda Pedersen Park. These parks demonstrated superior performance across multiple evaluation categories, including design and construction, effectiveness, condition, comfort and image, access and linkage, and sustainability. Their high scores reflect well-maintained facilities, enhanced user experiences, and accessibility through various modes of transportation.

In contrast, the lowest-scoring parks—Nobleton Wayside Park, Pioneer Park State Complex, and Lonnie C. Coburn Park—showed significant deficiencies. These parks were characterized by outdated or deteriorated facilities that have exceeded their functional lifespan, limited accessibility options, and insufficient maintenance levels. Such results highlight the need for targeted improvements to ensure these spaces meet community standards and provide adequate recreational access.

The overall park score averaged at 63, indicating a moderate level of performance across the system. Individual category scores contributed to this average: design and construction ranked 62, effectiveness 65, condition 64, comfort and image 63, access and linkage 57, and sustainability 62. These scores suggest that while some aspects of park management are meeting expectations, others—such as access and linkage—require focused attention to improve connectivity and accessibility.

# Importance of Mapping Park Scores

Mapping **(Map A8)** the overall park scores provides a critical tool for visualizing trends across the park system. This spatial representation allows stakeholders to identify geographic patterns in park performance, pinpointing areas with high-functioning facilities as well as regions requiring urgent intervention. By overlaying scores on a map:

## Enhanced Decision-Making:

Planners and policymakers can better allocate resources by identifying clusters of low-performing parks or underserved areas.

## Community Engagement:

Visual maps make complex data more accessible to the public, fostering transparency and encouraging community input on prioritizing improvements.

## Strategic Improvements:

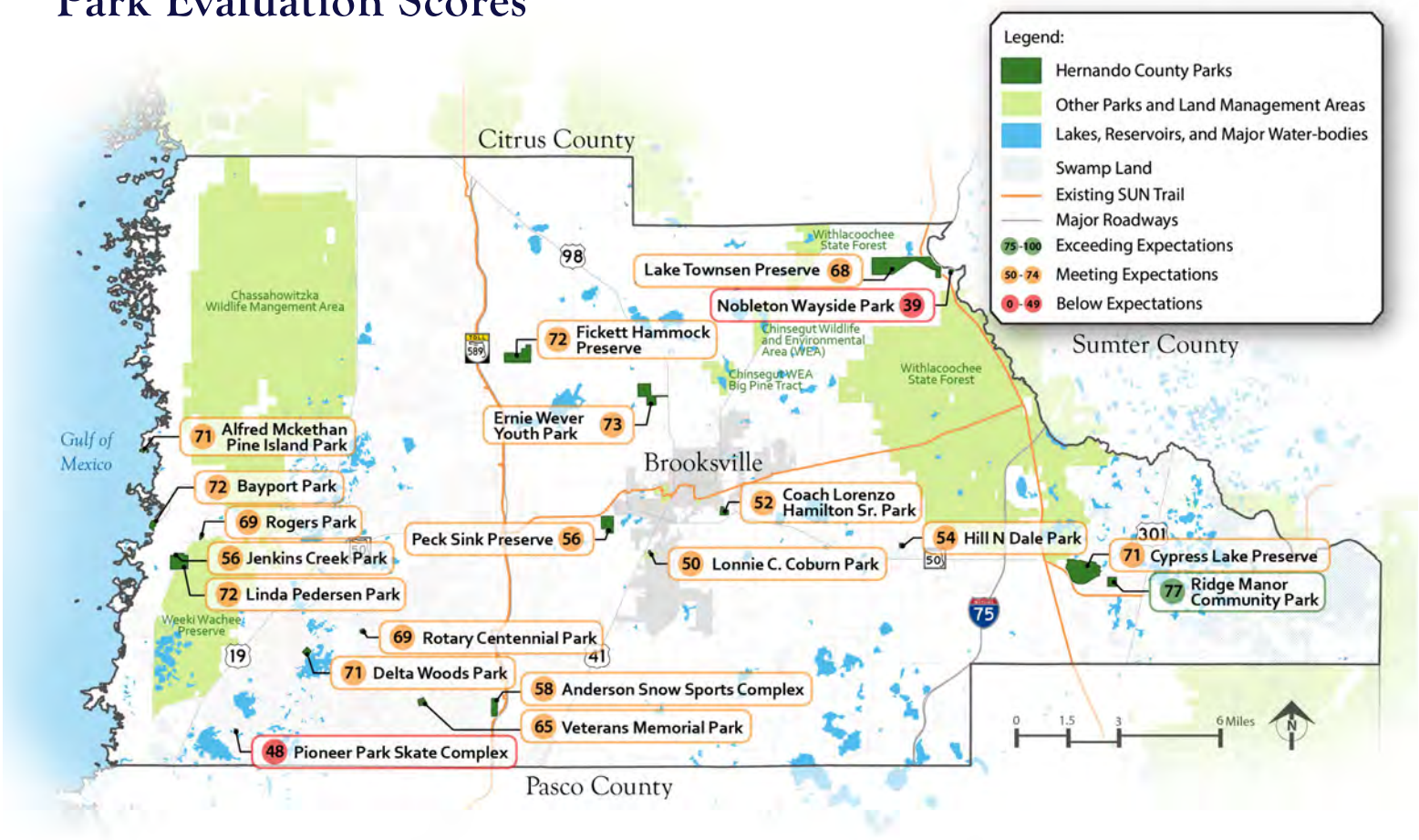
Mapping highlights disparities in park quality across neighborhoods, enabling targeted investments that address inequities in recreational access.

## Monitoring Progress:

Maps serve as benchmarks for tracking changes over time as improvements are implemented.

Overall, mapping park scores transforms raw data into actionable insights, ensuring that efforts to enhance the park system are both strategic and equitable.

# Park Evaluation Scores




*Map A8: Park Evaluation Scores*

## Use of Information

The purpose of gathering this information is three-fold. The first benefit is to develop familiarity with the current condition and performance of each public park space within Hernando County. Secondly, information gathered is evaluated to determine trends within the quality and performance of park spaces across the County. Trends will be identified that may help to identify or advance goals in equity, best practices, and operations and maintenance are common outcomes. Third, observations noted during in-person site visit about current conditions and performance of parks is carried forward and referenced during development of recommendations and prioritization of capital improvements.

## Summary

The following information consists of site notes gathered during in-field observations. This information is organized by park classification type and by park. This information is for reference only and does not constitute recommendations for specific actions for Hernando County. The County has actively invested in upgrading several parks, showcasing its commitment to enhancing community facilities. At Coach Lorenzo Hamilton, Sr. Park, the county recently installed a brand-new ADA-accessible playground, rebuilt Field 1 with fresh scoreboards and newly painted support structures, and replaced the stairs at the press box while applying new shelter rooftops. These improvements reflect the county's ongoing efforts to maintain and improve public recreational spaces for residents.

# Recreation Programs Assessment and Trends

## Overview

The Hernando County Recreation Assessment Trends report was developed to better understand current recreation program offerings, participation patterns, facility use, and service delivery throughout the County. This assessment helps identify how well current services are aligned with national trends, local needs, and community expectations.

Tracking recreation trends is essential for guiding decision-making, prioritizing investments, and ensuring that programs and facilities remain relevant, inclusive, and financially sustainable. A better understanding of these trends allows Hernando County to plan for future growth, address service gaps, and make strategic improvements that enhance quality of life for all residents.

To complete this work, Ballard*King & Associates was contracted to conduct a detailed evaluation of Hernando County's recreation system. The assessment includes participation data, an analysis of local and national recreation trends, a review of program delivery models, a gap analysis, and recommendations for future planning.

The analysis draws from County-provided information, regional and national benchmarking data, and public input gathered through stakeholder engagement. The findings serve as a foundation for identifying opportunities to expand services, build partnerships, and strengthen operational capacity across Hernando County's Parks and Recreation Department.

## Key Takeaways

- **The County's outdoor recreation facilities provide a range of programming options comparable to communities of similar size.**
- **The Market Potential Index (MPI) shows that adults in Hernando County have a higher propensity than the national average to participate in a variety of activities, particularly outdoor recreation.**
- **Hernando County's socioeconomic and demographic data reveal a market that is primarily senior and family-oriented and budget conscious. While there is interest in health and recreation, it tends to be focused on essential needs. Programs should be designed to align with these characteristics.**
- **Recreation staffing is at a minimum level at the County. Additional staffing would be required to expand programs and enhance operations.**
- **Staff interviews indicate that while crews currently provide quality of service, they lack the resources to adequately maintain or improve the park system with increased/ future programming and facilities.**

## Youth Sports Trends

Youth team sports participation dropped sharply during COVID-19 and has only partially recovered, remaining below pre-pandemic levels. Community sports programs are struggling with fewer resources, pushing many families toward private clubs, which increases gaps in access. There's growing emphasis on Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD), focusing on age-appropriate training and healthy athlete growth. Efforts to make youth sports more inclusive continue, but travel costs remain a challenge for many families.

## Outdoor Participation and Park Trends

In 2022, outdoor participation reached a record high, with more than 164 million Americans engaging in at least one outdoor activity. The outdoor recreation population is becoming increasingly diverse in age and background. However, since 2007, rates of frequent participation and the total number of outings have steadily declined.

Market data, existing park inventories, and community recreation trends point to specific amenities that can drive participation and satisfaction. Parks offering multi-functional spaces, adventure activities, nature-based features, dog-friendly areas, fitness and wellness amenities, and social gathering spaces are seeing the greatest demand.

A participant-centered approach to park planning involves understanding and responding to visitor preferences, behaviors, and needs—such as hiking, biking, water sports, camping, fishing, rock climbing, and wildlife viewing.

By monitoring trends in outdoor recreation, park and recreation managers can develop facilities that align with the evolving interests and needs of their communities.

Walking and hiking are consistently among the most popular leisure activities, with more than 50% of the South Atlantic region's population participating in one or both. This represents a significant portion of the community to serve.

Strategically planned parks and recreation facilities can increase visitation, enhance user satisfaction, and advance the mission of promoting outdoor recreation and delivering high-quality experiences for all visitors.

*Youth Soccer*

# Hernando County Recreation Programs

Hernando County Parks and Recreation primarily serves as the main provider of recreation facilities for a large geographic area, as Brooksville is the only incorporated community with its own services. Programs, activities, and special events are offered at key parks and facilities—Veterans Park, Delta Woods Park, Anderson Snow, Pioneer Park, Ridge Manor Park, and the Lake House. The department focuses on providing spaces rather than running extensive programming, offering a limited selection that includes cheerleading, baton, Tae Kwon Do, dance, summer camp, and a women's softball league. All activities carry fees that vary by program type and market conditions.

*Ernie Wever Park*

## Programs Offered

Hernando County Parks and Recreation offers a variety of programs that serve residents across multiple interest areas. These include cultural arts, special events, sports, outdoor opportunities, self-directed recreation, and youth-focused activities. While the Department directly operates some programs, many are delivered through partnerships with outside organizations, making the County's primary role one of providing and maintaining space for the following activities:

**A. Cultural Arts Programs:** Primarily youth-oriented offerings held in Department facilities, often through rental arrangements for program use.

**B. Special Events:** Range from small, park-based activities to large county-wide gatherings. While most events are free to attend, some, such as the Father/Daughter Dance, require registration. The Department supports these events by providing venues, staff assistance, and necessary equipment.

**C. Special Events:** Focused mainly on adult participation, with adult softball being the most common program. Youth sports are largely organized by independent leagues and associations that operate under agreements to use County athletic fields.

**D. Outdoor Recreation:** Although not formally programmed, the County's Preserves and parks offer abundant opportunities for self-guided activities such as hiking, nature observation, picnicking, and walking or running on trails.

## Program Delivery

The County uses three primary models to deliver programs, each balancing control, flexibility, and staffing requirements in different ways.

### Staff-Run Programs

Operated entirely by Department staff, both full-time and part-time, on a seasonal or year-round basis. This model gives the Department full control over program content, quality, and instruction, and can maximize revenue potential. However, it also demands significant staff management and operational oversight.

### Third-Party Programs

Delivered by contracted instructors or programmers under a revenue-sharing agreement with the County. This approach enables quick adaptation to changing trends and eliminates the need for additional part-time hires. The County must still monitor program quality, as these offerings reflect on the Department. Youth sports are a primary example of this model.

### Renter-Operated Programs

Run by outside groups that rent County facilities for their activities. This arrangement minimizes staff involvement beyond providing space, but programs may still be perceived as County-sponsored, requiring careful oversight. Examples include baton, dance, Tae Kwon Do, and cheerleading.

Together, these models allow the County to maintain a varied program portfolio without overextending resources, while still meeting the recreational needs of the community.

## Market Demands

Measuring recreation and activity participation is essential for understanding community needs, optimizing resource allocation, and planning for sustainable growth. Accurate data on how, where, and when people engage in recreational activities offers valuable insights for decision-making in areas such as resource management, promoting health and well-being, enhancing equity and accessibility, assessing economic and environmental impacts, and guiding community engagement and planning.

In Hernando County, ESRI's socioeconomic and demographic data reveal a market that is primarily senior and family-oriented, budget-conscious, and careful with spending. The community is large and diverse, including a significant Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population. While there is interest in health and recreation, it tends to be focused on essential needs. Therefore, programs should be designed to align with these characteristics.

The Market Potential Index (MPI) shows that adults in Hernando County have a higher propensity than the national average to participate in a variety of activities, particularly outdoor recreation, indicating strong opportunities to meet community demand through targeted programming.

*Lonnie C. Coburn Park*

| Activity | Percent | MPI |
|---|---|---|
| Aerobics | 6.9% | 89 |
| Archery | 2.6% | 106 |
| Backpacking | 3.3% | 96 |
| Baseball | 2.5% | 85 |
| Basketball | 4.1% | 74 |
| Bicycling (Mountain) | 2.8% | 84 |
| Bicycling (Road) | 10.1% | 91 |
| Boating (Power) | 5.5% | 123 |
| Bowling | 6.9% | 84 |
| Canoeing or Kayaking | 8.6% | 116 |
| Fishing (Fresh Water) | 12.9% | 130 |
| Fishing (Salt Water) | 4.1% | 121 |
| Football | 1.9% | 76 |
| Frisbee | 2.8% | 86 |
| Golf | 9.1% | 114 |
| Hiking | 18.1% | 94 |
| Horseback Riding | 2.1% | 103 |
| Hunting w/ Rifle | 5.0% | 150 |
| Hunting w/ Shotgun | 3.3% | 135 |
| Ice Skating | 1.7% | 68 |
| Jogging or Running | 7.7% | 75 |
| Motorcycling | 3.0% | 118 |
| Pickleball | 2.5% | 98 |
| Pilates | 2.1% | 78 |
| Ping Pong | 3.1% | 83 |
| Rock Climbing | 1.3% | 74 |
| Roller Skating | 1.4% | 74 |
| Soccer | 2.0% | 64 |
| Softball | 1.5% | 89 |
| Swimming | 16.5% | 105 |
| Target Shooting | 5.3% | 116 |
| Tennis | 3.0% | 80 |
| Volleyball | 1.9% | 77 |
| Walking for Exercise | 34.0% | 104 |
| Weight Lifting | 13.1% | 88 |
| Yoga | 8.2% | 82 |
| Zumba | 2.1% | 72 |
| Indoor Gardening or Plant Care | 16.8% | 99 |
| Visited an Aquarium | 6.8% | 95 |
| Went to an Art Gallery | 8.0% | 86 |
| Went to Beach | 26.4% | 92 |
| Played Billiards or Pool | 4.2% | 80 |
| Played Bingo | 4.1% | 99 |
| Did Birdwatching | 9.3% | 124 |
| Played Board Games | 19.9% | 92 |
| Read Book | 40.3% | 105 |
| Participated in Book Club | 3.4% | 85 |
| Went on Overnight Camping Trip | 14.5% | 106 |
| Played Cards | 19.1% | 107 |
| Played Chess | 19.1% | 80 |
| Played Computer Games Online | 15.4% | 102 |
| Went to a Museum | 11.4% | 86 |
| Played Musical Instrument | 7.4% | 88 |
| Did Painting/Drawing/ Sculpting | 9.4% | 90 |
| Did Photo Album or Scrap-Booking | 4.4% | 94 |
| Did Photography | 10.9% | 97 |
| Went to Live Theater | 7.8% | 90 |
| Participated in Trivia Games | 7.0% | 94 |
| Played (Console) Video or Electronic Game | 10.6% | 84 |

*Figure B18: Leisure Activities Participation*

Note: A MPI (Market Potential Index) measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in the specified trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the U.S. An MPI of 100 represents the U.S. average.

## Popular Physical Activities

Walking for exercise (34.0%, MPI 104) is the most popular physical activity, followed by swimming (16.5%, MPI 105), hiking (18.1%, MPI 94), and weightlifting (13.1%, MPI 88). Canoeing/kayaking (8.6%, MPI 116) and golf (9.1%, MPI 114) also show strong participation rates.

## Nature-Based Activities

Fishing, both freshwater (12.9%, MPI 130) and saltwater (4.1%, MPI 121), birdwatching (9.3%, MPI 124), and hunting with rifles (5.0%, MPI 150) are highly favored, with above-average MPIs indicating strong interest in outdoor recreation.

## Social and Leisure Activities

Board games (19.9%, MPI 92), cards (19.1%, MPI 107), reading books (40.3%, MPI 105), and visiting the beach (26.4%, MPI 92) are popular leisure activities. Overnight camping trips (14.5%, MPI 106) also rank high among group-based activities.

## Creative and Cultural Activities

Painting/drawing/sculpting (9.4%, MPI 90), photography (10.9%, MPI 97), visiting museums (11.4%, MPI 86), and live theater attendance (7.8%, MPI 90) reflect interest in arts and cultural experiences, though MPIs are slightly below average in some cases.

## Emerging Sports

Pickleball participation is relatively low at 2.5% but has an above-average MPI of 98, suggesting growth potential in Hernando County.

This data highlights a mix of high-demand activities like walking, fishing, and reading, alongside opportunities to expand offerings in growing areas such as pickleball, kayaking, and creative arts programming to better meet community interests. Supporting these priorities requires a network of recreation facilities that can accommodate both current participation patterns and emerging trends, ensuring residents have access to spaces that match their needs and interests.

*Delta Woods Park*

## Florida Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2023-2027: Top Recreation Activities Summary

The Florida SCORP, updated in May 2023, describes the unique qualities of the state's geography, climate, wildlife, and history that attracts tourists and residents to the area.

In the process of updating the State SCORP, a survey was completed to understand recreation interest and trends. The survey focused on seven broad recreation type categories to view results:

- Trail activities
- Nature study
- Saltwater beach activities
- Freshwater activities
- Outdoor sports
- Camping
- Hunting/shooting

While saltwater beach activities, camping, and hunting/shooting may not be directly related to the services that the Department provides today, the remaining recreation type trend rankings can inform what residents and people traveling to Florida may be expecting when they arrive or move within the state. The following summarize how more specific recreation activities ranked the 2021-2022 Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Study (Oct. 26, 2021-May 6, 2022)

Trail activities were ranked slightly higher on unpaved surfaces versus paved surfaces for activities outside of biking. Those who bike indicated that they bike most on maintained trails, roads with no bike lane, and paved green ways.

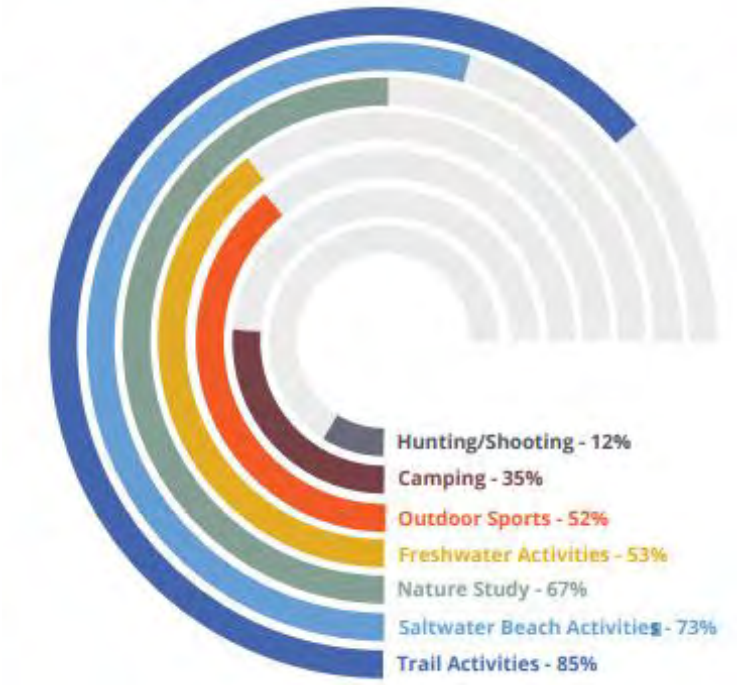



*Figure B24: Top Outdoor Recreation Activities in Florida Chart and Quote from the 2023-2027 Florida SCORP*

*"85% of respondents indicated that they participated in trail activities including running/walking, bicycling, skateboarding/rollerblading, geocaching, and OHV (off-highway vehicle) riding"*

Those who participated in nature study activities ranked bird watching, gardening, wildflower viewing, and nature photography the highest.

Hernando's proximity to fresh bodies of water makes the County uniquely qualified to support some of the state's most popular freshwater activities. Kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, canoing, and motor-less boating were the highest ranked paddle based activities. The most popular types of fishing (in descending order) included bank/shore fishing, boat fishing from a pier, dock or jetty fishing, kayak/canoe fishing and fishing from a stand up paddle board.

In outdoor sports, golf, pickleball, tennis, soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, disc golf, volleyball, and football were identified as the top 10 highest ranked.

## Recreation Trends identified included:

- E-bikes, scooters, and other electric mobility devices
- Pump tracks at a variety of difficulty levels
- Outdoor recreation users using technology for locating or planning recreation activities, buying recreation equipment, seeking educational information
- Outdoor recreation providers using technology for program registration, communication, and gauging use of trails and parks
- Flying drones or remote-controlled (RC) airplanes and boats
- Pickleball, consistently growing 11.5% each year 2016-2021

The SCORP work group identified four (4) priority areas. Goals and strategies were identified to work towards improvement for each priority area (Figure B25).

*Figure B25: State Priority Areas, Goals, and Strategies Diagram from the 2023-2027 Florida SCORP*

Consideration of state and national recreation trend gives Hernando County a point of reference in what ways the population is indicating a particularly high need for facilities compared to state or nation wide trend of interest and needs. This comparison can assist in setting priorities for facilities or program additions or improvements. Following the update to the Florida SCORP in 2027, the Department will have the opportunity to again reference and compare changes in recreation trends across Florida.

# Recreation Facilities

The community's strong participation in activities such as walking, fishing, swimming, hiking, and other outdoor pursuits underscores the importance of having well-maintained and accessible recreation facilities. Hernando County's network of indoor and outdoor spaces provides the physical foundation for both structured programming and self-directed use, but facility limitations in condition, capacity, and distribution impact their ability to fully support current demand and future growth.

## Indoor Recreation Facilities

Indoor spaces support activities such as creative arts, educational workshops, and community gatherings, but capacity is limited. The Kennedy Park Recreation Building in Brooksville is a single-room community center used solely for rentals, while the Lake House in Spring Hill hosts summer camp and other rental-based activities in a medium-sized room with a kitchen and office space.

Both facilities face similar challenges: small footprints, dated interiors, lack of internet and security features, and inadequate parking. Programming is generally limited to classroom-style activities, which restricts variety and reach.

**Indoor Recreation Facilities**

| Facility Type | Median Facilities per Population (100,000 - 250,000) |
|---|---|
| | |
| Recreation Centers | 3.6 |
| Community Centers | 3.8 |
| Senior Centers | 1.7 |
| Nature Centers | 1.5 |
| Aquatic Centers | 1.9 |

*Figure B20:*

*Hernando County Interactive Animal Event, Image: Facebook*

*Hernando County Science Camp, Image: Facebook*

## Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Outdoor recreation amenities in Hernando County play a vital role in supporting many of the community's most popular activities such as walking, fishing, hiking, kayaking, and organized sports. Anderson Snow Park is the County's flagship facility, featuring eight baseball and softball diamonds, six rectangular multipurpose fields, multiple restrooms, a splash pad, and a recently constructed maintenance building. All fields are equipped with lighting for evening use, but parking capacity is insufficient during peak activity periods, which can impact user experience.

Delta Woods Park provides a diverse mix of recreational options, including two rectangular fields, eight tennis courts, two sand volleyball courts, handball and bocce courts, and restroom facilities. Most courts and fields are lit, except for the sand volleyball courts, allowing for extended play hours.

Ernie Wever Park offers seven baseball/softball diamonds, multiple rectangular fields that can be configured for various sports, a dedicated football field, restrooms, and a maintenance building. While the diamonds generally have adequate parking, near the rectangular fields is limited. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park (formerly Kennedy Park) has two lit baseball diamonds with grass infields and restroom facilities, though parking remains minimal.

Ridge Manor Park includes four baseball/softball diamonds, one rectangular field, a sand volleyball court, a batting cage, restrooms, and a maintenance building. Veterans Memorial Park offers one baseball diamond and four rectangular fields, with lighting on most playing surfaces but inadequate parking to fully support high participation.

Overall, the County's outdoor recreation facilities provide a range of options comparable to communities of similar size. However, challenges with parking availability, field distribution, and lighting in certain locations suggest opportunities to enhance capacity and accessibility. Addressing these factors would better accommodate the current level of use and support anticipated growth in outdoor recreational participation.

**Outdoor Recreation Facilities**

| Facility Type | Median Facilities per Population (100,000 - 250,000) |
|---|---|
| | |
| Diamond Fields | 30.7 |
| Rectangle Fields | 28.4 |
| Tennis Courts | 24.0 |
| Pickleball Courts | 10.4 |
| Volleyball Courts | 4.5 |
| Splash Pad | 3.1 |

*Figure B21:*

*Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park*

# Program Gap Analysis & Opportunities

An analysis of County and partner offerings shows that while most major program areas are represented, there are notable gaps in Cultural Arts, General Interest, Senior/Older Adult, and Teen programming. In these areas, residents often depend on private providers. Limited staffing and facility space, particularly indoors, have led the County to focus primarily on Youth and Sports, with the majority of programs delivered either by County staff or partner organizations. These indoor space limitations also restrict the ability to expand into other areas such as Cultural Arts, Education, Fitness, and a broader range of interest-based activities.

Program enrollment has remained strong, with most offerings reaching full capacity throughout the year. The busiest period for staff occurs in the summer, when adult softball overlaps with the County's youth camp program. With 43.9% of the population aged 55 or older, there is a clear opportunity to expand programs that appeal to this demographic. While additional sessions have been introduced at times, limited staffing and facility space have prevented significant growth in overall offerings.

*Hernando County CPR Course, Image: Facebook*

# Recreation Staff

Recreation services are overseen by the Operations Supervisor. Program expansion is limited by minimal staffing and facility constraints. Staff having to balance program delivery with administrative duties and handling customer inquiries, leaves them with little time for new activity planning.

The County lacks a formal facility use policy, fee policy, and cost recovery policy, though programs and special events are expected to cover direct costs. Financial reconciliation processes are cumbersome, and marketing is managed internally through flyer creation and website updates.

Overall, recreation staffing is at a minimum level, limiting capacity for long-range planning, operational tracking, cost recovery monitoring, and policy development. Additional staffing would be required to expand programs and enhance operations.

# Operations & Maintenance

Hernando County's park system is maintained by three primary crews, with common area mowing handled by a contractor.

**The Maintenance Crew:** (6 full-time staff) oversees buildings, structures, general upkeep, and the mowing contract from the Parks and Recreation office.

**The Athletic Field & Turf Crew:** (3 full-time staff) manages all athletic fields, including irrigation, turf care, and mulching, and is stationed at park locations.

**The Operations Crew:** (9 full-time staff plus attendants and dock workers) handles the warehouse and other park tasks such as playground surface upkeep, litter removal, and restroom cleaning, working from three geographic zones.

*Hernando County Construction/Maintenance Sports Courts, Image: Facebook*

Staff interviews indicate that while crews provide quality service, they lack the resources to adequately maintain or improve the park system.

With roughly 900 acres of parks and facilities being maintained—ranging from developed parks to large open spaces—the County operates at a low service level of approximately one staff member per 50 acres. Limited staffing results in a reactive maintenance approach, with staff dividing time between scheduled work and addressing issues as they arise.

Additional challenges include outdated job descriptions, no formal maintenance standards, and the absence of a comprehensive maintenance plan or management system. Staff often spend significant time traveling between sites, especially in the eastern portion of the County, creating inefficiencies. Other needs include increased use of contractors for tree work, having a Certified Playground Safety Inspector on staff, securing storage for equipment, and addressing vandalism that disrupts planned maintenance tasks. While equipment quality is generally good, availability of trained staff to operate it remains a constraint.

*Cypress Lakes Preserve*

# Recreation Trends Summary

National and local recreation trends continue to evolve as communities shift demographically and culturally. Across the country, there is growing demand for flexible, self-directed, and inclusive recreation opportunities that support physical, mental, and social well-being. Hernando County reflects many of these national patterns, particularly in the rising interest in walking, hiking, and outdoor experiences.

The following key trends emerged from the assessment:

## Growth in Outdoor Use:

Activities like walking, hiking, kayaking, birdwatching, and nature-based education continue to grow in popularity. These trends align with Hernando County being integral to Florida's Nature Coast and available natural resources.

## Limited Program Capacity

County-run programs such as summer camps and adult softball leagues often operate at or near full capacity. Program growth is constrained by limited indoor space, staffing, and scheduling flexibility.

## Youth Sports Demand

Participation in organized youth sports remains high, with leagues and associations capturing a large share of the youth market. However, many programs report being at or over capacity due to field availability.

## Emerging Activities

National data highlights rapid growth in pickleball, kayaking, hiking, and other outdoor pursuits. These activities present key opportunities for expansion in Hernando County.

## Senior Program Gaps

With nearly 44% of the population aged 55 and older, there is a notable gap in targeted programs for older adults, particularly for active and working seniors seeking evening or weekend options.

## Operational Challenges

While staff are recognized as responsive and committed, a lack of sufficient indoor space, outdated facilities, and minimal staffing limits the ability to grow programs, improve access, or plan for long-term needs.

These trends, combined with national benchmarking data and resident input, form the basis for the findings and recommendations outlined in the sections that follow.

*Pioneer Park*

# Level of Service Analysis & Benchmarking

## Overview

A Level of Service (LOS) analysis is used to measure how well a parks and recreation system is meeting the needs of its population. It provides a structured method to assess the availability, distribution, and accessibility of parks and related facilities within a defined area.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) defines LOS as "an allocation mechanism for the delivery of park land and basic recreation facilities throughout a community." The intent is to establish a consistent baseline for the provision of parks and recreation services, so that residents across different areas have similar opportunities to access and benefit from those services.

This analysis considers five primary measurements:

### Acreage Level of Service:

Evaluates the total amount of park land available and its distribution relative to the community's population. The goal is to determine whether residents have access to an adequate supply of open space.

### Facilities Level of Service:

Looks at the number and type of facilities—such as sports fields, playgrounds, courts, and indoor centers—across the park system. This helps identify patterns in availability and potential gaps in facility offerings.

### Funding and Staffing Level of Service:

Reviews the allocation of financial and personnel resources for park operations and capital projects. This includes budgets for maintenance, programming, and staff levels across the system.

## Key Takeaways

- **Strong Urban Access: Highest concentration of accessible parks is found in Spring Hill and Brooksville, where multiple park service areas overlap.**
- **Limited Rural Coverage: Outlying and rural parts of the County have minimal walkable or drivable access to nearby parks.**
- **Coastal Recreation Gaps: Boat and kayak access is clustered along the coast, leaving inland areas underserved for water recreation.**
- **Regional Parks Fill Gaps: Larger parks like district and community types help extend service coverage to broader areas.**
- **Growth Requires Investment: Continued population and housing growth will require strategic investment to sustain level of service.**

### Access Level of Service:

Assesses how easily residents can reach parks and facilities via various modes of transportation, including walking, biking, public transit, and driving. It considers typical travel distances as well as physical or geographic barriers.

### Benchmarking:

Benchmarking is a tool to understand the broader picture of how Hernando County acreage, facilities, funding and staffing and overall access compares to peer communities and national standards.

The LOS analysis provides a data-driven foundation for identifying where services are well-aligned with community needs and where adjustments may be appropriate.

# Acreage Level of Service

A common way to measure parkland adequacy is by calculating the number of park acres available per 1,000 residents. While this metric is widely used, differences in how communities define "parks" can make cross-community comparisons challenging and reduce the relevance of national benchmarks. Therefore, analyzing local data provides a more accurate understanding of parkland needs. By examining current acreage across various park types—considering factors such as ownership, access, and management—planners can better assess how well existing parkland aligns with community expectations. Ultimately, the most appropriate acreage standards for Hernando County should reflect local priorities and the feedback gathered through public engagement. This approach ensures that long-term park planning is tailored to the specific needs and preferences of the community.

In the 2018 Hernando County Comprehensive Plan, the County established clear Level of Service (LOS) standards to guide park system planning. These standards set a goal of providing residents with sufficient opportunities for both active and passive recreation. Specifically, the County aims to maintain 2 acres of parkland with active recreation facilities per 1,000 residents at peak population, along with an additional 2 acres of passive recreation and open space per 1,000 residents on a countywide basis. The plan calls for at least one district or community park to be located and maintained within each designated impact fee park district to ensure equitable access across the County. These goals and its related strategies are outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and serve as the foundation for evaluating current parkland availability and identifying gaps in service throughout this report.

*Lake Townsen*

# Acreage Level of Service

**Hernando County Acreage Level of Service**

| | | 2025 Hernando County Level of Service (Pop. 212,807)* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Park Types | Acreage | Current Hernando LOS (acres/1,000 pop)*** | Hernando County LOS Standard (acres/1,000 pop) | Park Acreage Needed to Meet Standard LOS | NRPA LOS (acres/1,000 pop)^ | Peer Counties (15.7 ac |
| Neighborhood | 41.3 | 0.2 acres | 2.0 acres | + 107 acres | +57.2 acres | +1,440.5 acres |
| Community | 65.0 | 0.3 acres | | | | |
| District | 212.5 | 1.0 acres | | | | |
| Preserves | 1,582.2 | 7.4 acres | 2.0 acres | 0 acres | | |
| Total | 1,901.1 | 8.9 acres | 4.0 acres | | 9.2 acres | 15.7 acres |

*Figure B22: Hernando County Acreage Level of Service*

Notes: *Source: US Census Bureau; **Source: BEBR; ***Source: Hernando County ^National Recreation and Park Association Agency Performance Review Median Number per Facilities per 1,000 for jurisdictions with populations between 100,000 - 249,999; ^^Peer Counties include: Pasco, Sumter, Citrus, Martin, and St. Lucie.

Hernando County currently provides a total of approximately 1,901 acres of parkland, with acreage divided into neighborhood parks (41.3 acres), community parks (65.0 acres), district parks (212.5 acres), and nature preserves (1,582.2 acres). When adjusted for population, this translates to just 0.1 acres per 1,000 residents for neighborhood parks, 0.3 acres for community parks, and 0.9 acres for district parks. In contrast, preserve lands account for 7.4 acres per 1,000 residents, far exceeding the County's passive recreation target.

Compared to the adopted Level of Service standards outlined in Hernando County's 2018 Comprehensive Plan—which calls for 2 acres per 1,000 residents for active parks (neighborhood, community, and district combined) and an additional 2 acres per 1,000 for passive/open space—Hernando is significantly underperforming in active recreation acreage. The combined total for active park types is just 1.3 acres per 1,000 residents, well below the 2-acre minimum. Meanwhile, the County has far exceeded its passive recreation goal, with more than three times the minimum standard provided through its extensive preserve lands.

This imbalance highlights a critical need for investment in neighborhood, community, and district parks to meet the County's own standards for accessible, active recreation—especially as the population continues to grow.

*Veteran's Memorial Park*

**Hernando County Acreage Level of Service to Maintain**

| Park Type | 2050 Hernando County Level of Service (Est. Pop. 252,200)** | |
|---|---|---|
| | Additional Acreage Needed by 2050 to Maintain Current 2025 LOS | Additional Acreage Needed by 2050 to Meet Existing County LOS Standard |
| Neighborhood | + 7.6 AC | +185.6 AC |
| Community | +12 AC | |
| District | +39.3 AC | |
| Preserves | +292.9 AC | +0 AC |
| Total | +351.9 AC | +185.6 AC |

*Figure B23: Acreage Needed to Maintain Level of Service*

Notes: **Source: BEBR

# Facilities Level of Service

The Facility LOS assessment measures how many recreational amenities, such as sports fields and playgrounds, are available per capita. This helps evaluate how well the current park system supports residents' recreational needs.

As with acreage, there are no universal benchmarks for facilities. Each community typically develops standards based on its own usage patterns and priorities. However, these metrics can still offer useful context when compared to state or national trends.

Facility counts were compiled through park site evaluations and departmental input, creating an inventory that reflects what is currently available. This data forms the basis for understanding where there may be gaps or opportunities for improvement based on the population served.

**Hernando County Facility Level of Service**

| | Facility Type | Existing Number of Facilities | Median Number of Facilities by NRPA Averages | Facilities Needed by 2050 to meet NRPA Averages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fields | Baseball (Adult & Youth/T-Ball) | 20 | 31.1 | 11 |
| | Softball (Adult & Youth) | 4 | 31.1 | 27 |
| | Multi-Purpose Fields | 20 | 11.4 | 9 |
| Courts | Tennis | 3 | 24.7 | 22 |
| | Pickleball | 4 | 10.7 | 7 |
| | Sand Volleyball | 5 | 5.4 | 0 |
| | Basketball | 10.5 | 21.8 | 11 |
| Facilities | Playground | 18 | 42.5 | 25 |
| | Kayak Launch | 8 | n/a | n/a |
| | Boat Ramp | 7 | n/a | n/a |
| | Picnic Pavilion | 24 | n/a | n/a |
| | Restroom | 25 | 31.3 | 6 |
| Aquatics | Swimming Pool | 0 | 3.6 | 4 |
| | Competitive Swimming Pool | 0 | 1.8 | 2 |
| | Splash Pad | 1 | 3.5 | 3 |

*Figure B26: Hernando County Facility Level of Service*

Notes: *Number of facilities per 1,000 population; **National Recreation and Park Association Agency Performance Review Median Number per Facilities per 1,000 population for jurisdictions with population between 100,000 - 249,000.

*Anderson Snow Park*

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides facility standards based on population to help communities evaluate whether they are meeting typical service levels. When comparing Hernando County's current facility inventory to these standards, the County would need to add 27 softball fields, 25 playgrounds, 22 tennis courts, 11 basketball courts, 11 baseball fields, 7 pickleball courts, 6 restrooms, and 3 splash pads to be on par with national norms. Additionally, Hernando currently has no swimming pools, traditional or competitive, which represents a complete absence of public aquatic facilities despite the expected demand. Only two facility types currently meet or exceed NRPA benchmarks: multi-purpose fields, which are more than sufficient, and sand volleyball courts, which align with population-based standards. While not included in NRPA benchmarks, amenities like kayak launches, boat ramps, and picnic pavilions are moderately available and valued locally.

In addition to these specific facility deficits, Hernando County lacks many of the broader recreational amenities that are commonly found in peer communities and identified in NRPA guidelines as essential for meeting diverse resident needs. These include trails, water parks, recreation centers, community centers, senior centers, nature centers, aquatic centers, therapeutic pools, leisure pools, and indoor or outdoor running tracks. The absence of these facilities represents a major gap in service delivery, particularly for seniors, youth, individuals with disabilities, and residents seeking non-sport or wellness-based recreational opportunities. These amenities are critical to supporting physical and mental health, year-round indoor programming, and equitable access to recreation for all demographics. To address these service gaps and prepare for projected growth, Hernando County will need to develop a strategy for facility investment. This may include:

- Prioritizing high-need categories such as playgrounds, softball fields, and court sports (e.g., basketball, tennis, pickleball).
- Exploring funding options, including impact fees, grants, partnerships, and capital improvement planning.
- Identifying potential sites for new recreation centers, aquatic facilities, and community hubs, particularly in underserved areas.
- Conducting a trail and connectivity assessment to evaluate non-motorized access and develop a countywide trails network.
- Continue to engage the public through surveys and outreach to refine priorities and align investments with community preferences.
- Coordinating with schools, nonprofits, and private partners to expand programming and share facility resources where feasible.

# Funding and Staffing Level of Service

One method of evaluating park system adequacy is by calculating the number of acres available per 1,000 residents. Although this ratio is commonly used, inconsistencies in how communities define and classify parks can make it challenging to compare across regions or establish universal standards.

A more meaningful approach involves assessing local data to understand how parkland is distributed and accessed. This way communities can better determine how current land resources align with local expectations.

In Hernando County, acreage benchmarks should be informed by community input and tailored to reflect resident preferences. This helps guide future planning in a way that responds to actual needs rather than relying on generalized standards.

Hernando County is currently under-resourced in both staffing and funding for its parks system. With only 40.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, the County has less than half the personnel recommended by national standards or seen in comparable counties. This shortage stretches existing staff thin across a large park system, potentially impacting maintenance and service quality.

Financially, Hernando's parks budget is also far below average. The County spends just $41.34 per capita, compared to $94.27 nationally and $65.24 among peers. Its total budget of $8.8 million is significantly lower than the $14.8 million NRPA benchmark and $20.4 million peer county average. These gaps indicate that Hernando County lacks the staff and funding needed to adequately support current operations, much less plan for future growth.

**Hernando County Funding and Staffing Level of Service**

| | | Hernando (2025)* | NRPA (2025)** | Peer Counties (2025)*** | Needed to Meet NRPA Average | Needed to Meet Peer County Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FTE | FTE Staff | 40.8 FTEs | 130.5 FTEs | 106.5 FTEs | +89.7 FTEs | +65.7 FTEs |
| | Acres per FTE | 46.6 acres | | 41.4 acres | | |
| | $ per FTE | $215,727 | $113,057 | $191,109 | | |
| $$$ | Expenditures | $8,797,343 | $14,754,000 | $20,353,101 | +$5,956,657 | +$11,555,758 |
| $$$ | Expenditures per Capita | $41.34 | $94.27 | $65.24 | +$52.93 | +$23.90 |

*Figure B27: Hernando County Funding and Staffiig Level of Service*

Notes: FTE = Full Time Equivalent; *Source: Hernando County; **National Recreation and Park Association Agency Performance Review Median Number per Facilities per 1,000 population for jurisdictions with population between 100,000 - 249,000; *** Peer Counties include: Pasco, Sumter, Citrus, Martin, and St. Lucie.

To move toward a more sustainable and equitable parks system, Hernando County will need to significantly increase both staffing levels and budget allocations. The current shortfall—less than half the recommended full-time staff and well below average per capita spending—suggests that existing resources are insufficient to properly maintain facilities, expand programming, or plan for future growth. Immediate next steps should include:

- Phasing in additional FTE positions to gradually align with peer and national staffing levels.
- Developing a long-term funding strategy to increase per capita investment and overall park system capacity.
- Exploring alternative funding sources, such as grants, partnerships, and impact fees, to reduce reliance on general funds.
- Conducting a workload and operations review to optimize the use of current staff and identify priority areas where investment would yield the greatest impact.
- Addressing these gaps is essential not only for maintaining existing assets, but also for supporting the County's long-term goals for recreation access, quality of life, and equitable service delivery as the population continues to grow.

# Access Level of Service

Access Level of Service (LOS) evaluates how easily residents can reach parks and recreation facilities. This analysis focuses on proximity—measured in distance or travel time—and helps answer a key planning question: How accessible are parks to the people who use them?

In Hernando County, understanding park access is particularly important because:

- The population is concentrated in areas like Spring Hill and Brooksville, making proximity to parks critical for everyday use.
- The County's mix of urban and rural environments creates varied access needs, with some residents relying more heavily on driving than walking or biking.
- Physical barriers, such as highways or undeveloped land, may limit direct access for nearby neighborhoods, despite close geographic proximity.

**How Access is Measured**

Access LOS is calculated using GIS-based analysis of the County's street network. Travel distances from park entrances are mapped out in increments (e.g., ½ mile, 1 mile, 3 miles, 5 miles, and 10 miles) to define each park's service area. This helps identify how far someone can reasonably walk, bike, or drive to a park or facility.

- Neighborhood parks typically serve nearby residents and may lack large parking areas, making them more suited for walking or biking access.
- Community and regional parks, by contrast, are designed to accommodate larger visitor volumes and often require visitors to drive or take public transit.

Natural and structural barriers—such as highways, limited crossings, or disconnected street patterns—are also factored into the analysis, ensuring the results reflect actual, not theoretical, access.

These analyses generate walksheds, bikesheds, and drivesheds, which represent realistic service areas for each park type based on:

**½ mile = 10-minute walk or 5-minute bike ride**

**1 mile = 20-minute walk or 10-minute bike ride**

**3 miles = 15-minute bike ride or 5-minute drive**

This data-driven approach ensures that access planning reflects real-world travel behaviors and supports equitable distribution of recreational opportunities.

The Level of Service (LOS) access analysis for Hernando County shows that most residents enjoy good proximity to parks, particularly in the Spring Hill and Brooksville areas, where park service areas frequently overlap. These regions benefit from the highest concentration of both neighborhood and community parks, with walkable and bikeable access generally within ½ to 1 mile in many neighborhoods.

More rural parts of the County—especially the northeastern and eastern areas—show limited access, often falling outside the 5- or 10-mile service zones, pointing to underserved communities in terms of both proximity and park variety.

Boating and kayaking access is concentrated along the western coast near Hernando Beach and Bayport. These water-based recreation facilities primarily serve a narrow band of the population and offer no access to inland residents, highlighting the need for continued investment in coastal infrastructure and better connectivity for non-coastal communities.

Neighborhood parks show highly localized service areas (typically within ½ to 1 mile), which is effective for densely populated areas like Spring Hill, where households often consist of two or fewer people and walkability is more feasible. However, large areas of the County remain outside walkable range, which is especially important given that 36% of households include at least one person with a disability and 17% of homes are renter-occupied—factors that heighten the importance of nearby, inclusive parks.

District and community parks provide broader coverage with 5- to 10-mile service areas and help fill access gaps between smaller facilities. These parks play a crucial role in providing equitable recreation access to residents across the County, especially where neighborhood-scale parks are lacking.

*Pine Island Park*

# Benchmarking

A common method for evaluating level of services is the comparison of peer communities to identify lessons learned and to provide periodical context. For this purpose, County staff identified communities in Florida with similar characteristics to Hernando. Peer communities include: Pasco County, Sumter County, Citrus County, Martin County, and St. Lucie County.

Key findings include:

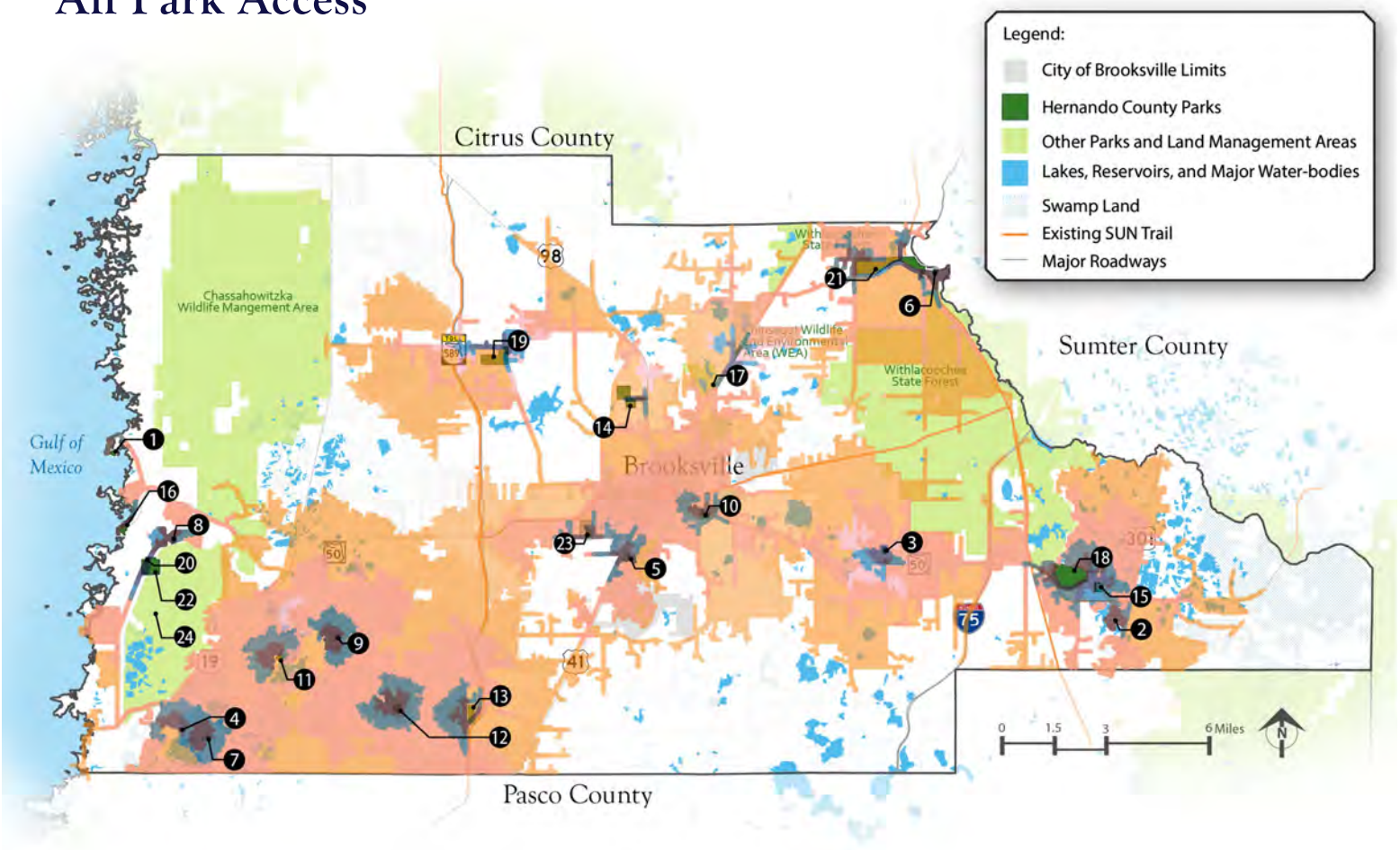
- Hernando County would need approximately 2,468 additional acres of parkland to peer county average.
- Funding for parks in Hernando County is 63% of peer counties. Hernando County would require an additional $5.1 Million in annual funding to match the average.
- Hernando County is below average for parkland acreage, funding, and staffing.

**Hernando County Parkland Acreage Level of Service Comparison**

| County | Population (2024 ) | Size (Sq Miles) | # of Parks | Acreage | Acres LOS | Total Budget | Expenditures per Capita | Staff (FTE) | Acres per FTE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hernando | 212,807 | 589 | 20 | 424 Parks / 452 OS | 4.1 | $8,797,343 | $41.34 | 40.78 | 21.5 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Pasco | 632,996 | 868 | 37 | 15,000 | 23.7 | $31,303,931 | $49.45 | 204 | 73.5 |
| Sumter | 151,565 | 580 | 10 | 289 Land / 1,181 Lakes | 9.7 | $6,033,492 | $39.81 | 11 | 26.3 |
| Citrus | 166,696 | 773 | 31 | 607.79 | 3.6 | $1,803,260 | $10.82 | 17 | 35.8 |
| Martin | 163,315 | 753 | 73 | 1,730 | 10.6 | $16,973,191 | $103.93 | 84 | 20.6 |
| St. Lucie | 373,586 | 688 | 75 | 11,000 (562 Beaches) | 30.9 | $45,651,631 | $122.20 | 216.87 | 50.7 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Average | 297,632 | 732 | 45 | 5,725.4 | 15.7 | $20,353,101 | $65.24 | 106.57 | 41.4 |

*Figure B28: Hernando County Parkland Acreage Level of Service Comparison to Peer Counties*

# All Park Access




*Map A9: Level of Service All Park Access*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. Nobleton Wayside Park
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. Rogers Park
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

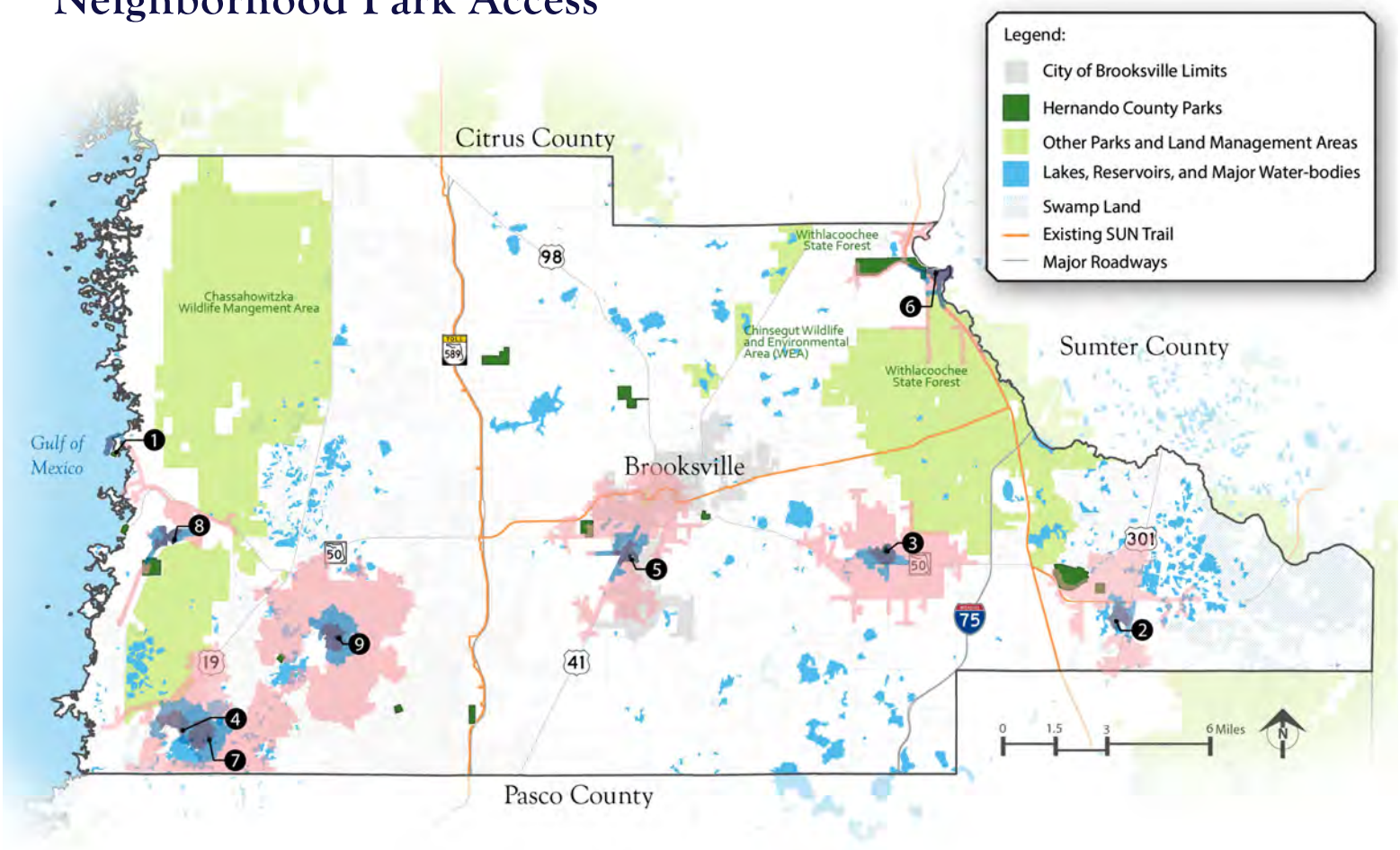
## Preserves

16. Bayport Park
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. Jenkins Creek Park
21. Lake Townsen Preserve
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 0.5 Miles
- 1 Miles
- 3 Miles
- 5 Miles

# Neighborhood Park Access




*Map A10: Level of Service Neighborhood Park Access*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. Nobleton Wayside Park
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. Rogers Park
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

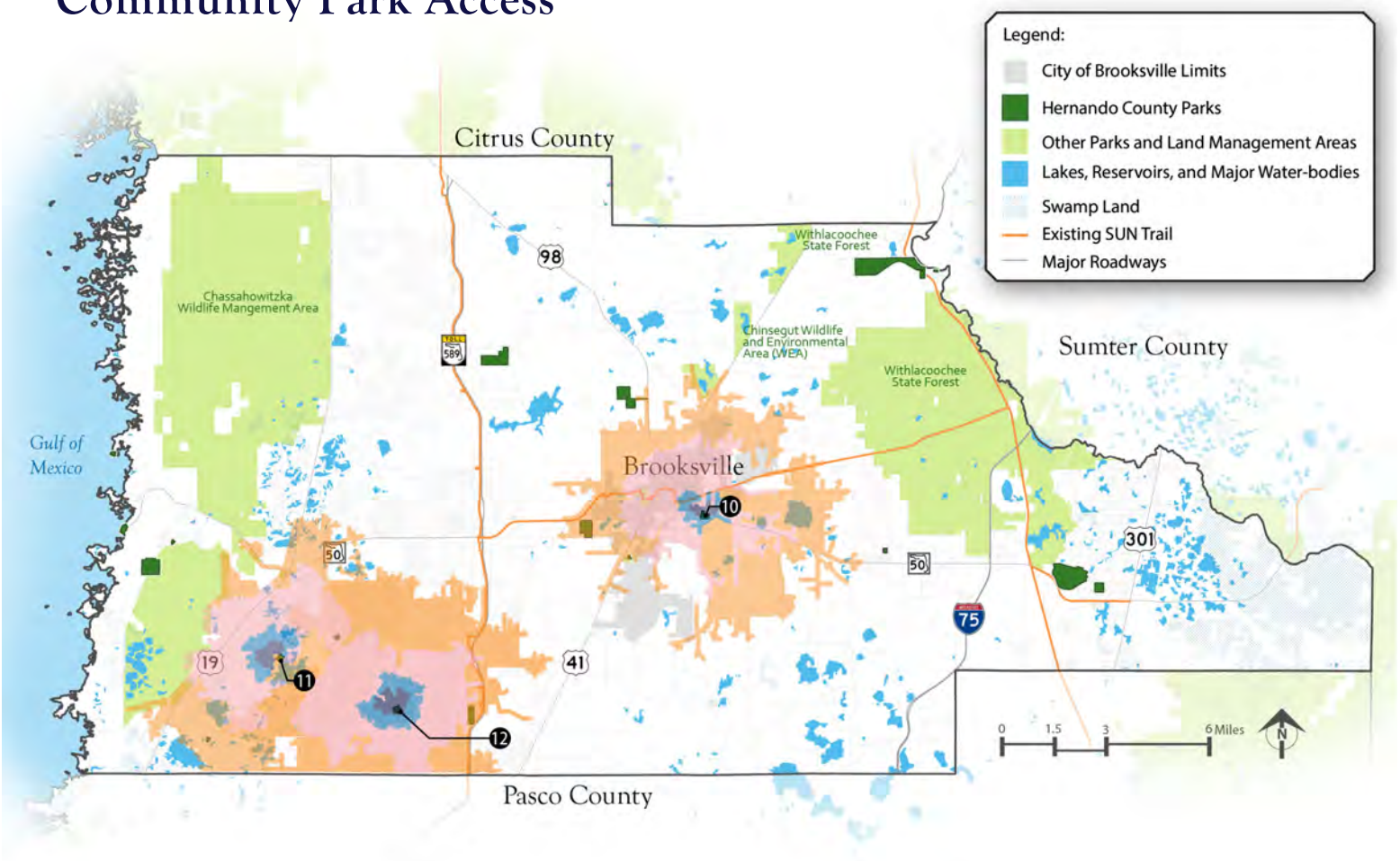
## Preserves

16. Bayport Park
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. Jenkins Creek Park
21. Lake Townsen Preserve
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 0.5 Miles
- 1 Miles
- 3 Miles

# Community Park Access




*Map A11: Level of Service Community Parks*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. Nobleton Wayside Park
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. Rogers Park
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

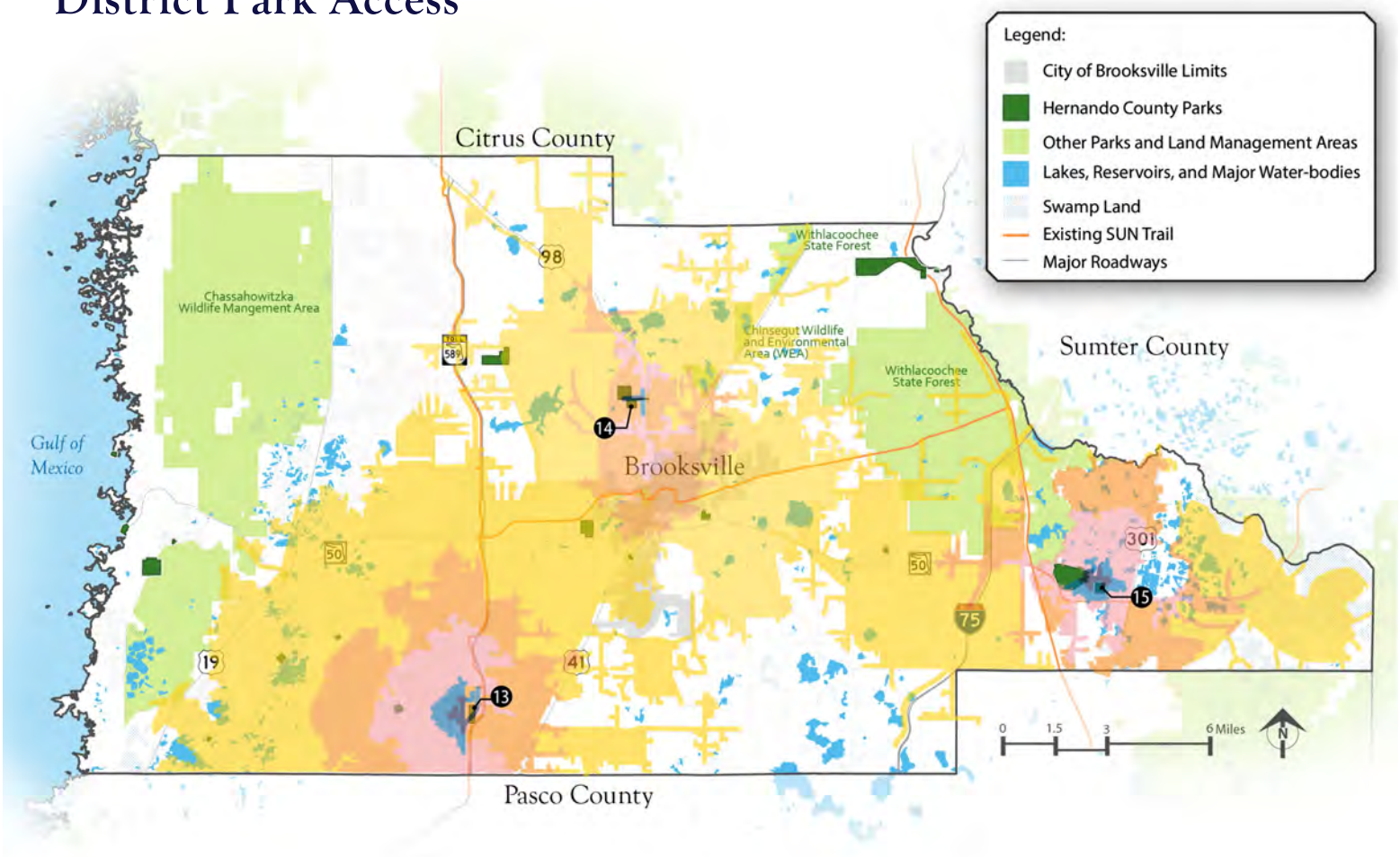
## Preserves

16. Bayport Park
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. Jenkins Creek Park
21. Lake Townsen Preserve
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 0.5 Miles
- 1 Miles
- 3 Miles
- 5 Miles

# District Park Access




*Map A12: Level of Service District Parks*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. Nobleton Wayside Park
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. Rogers Park
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

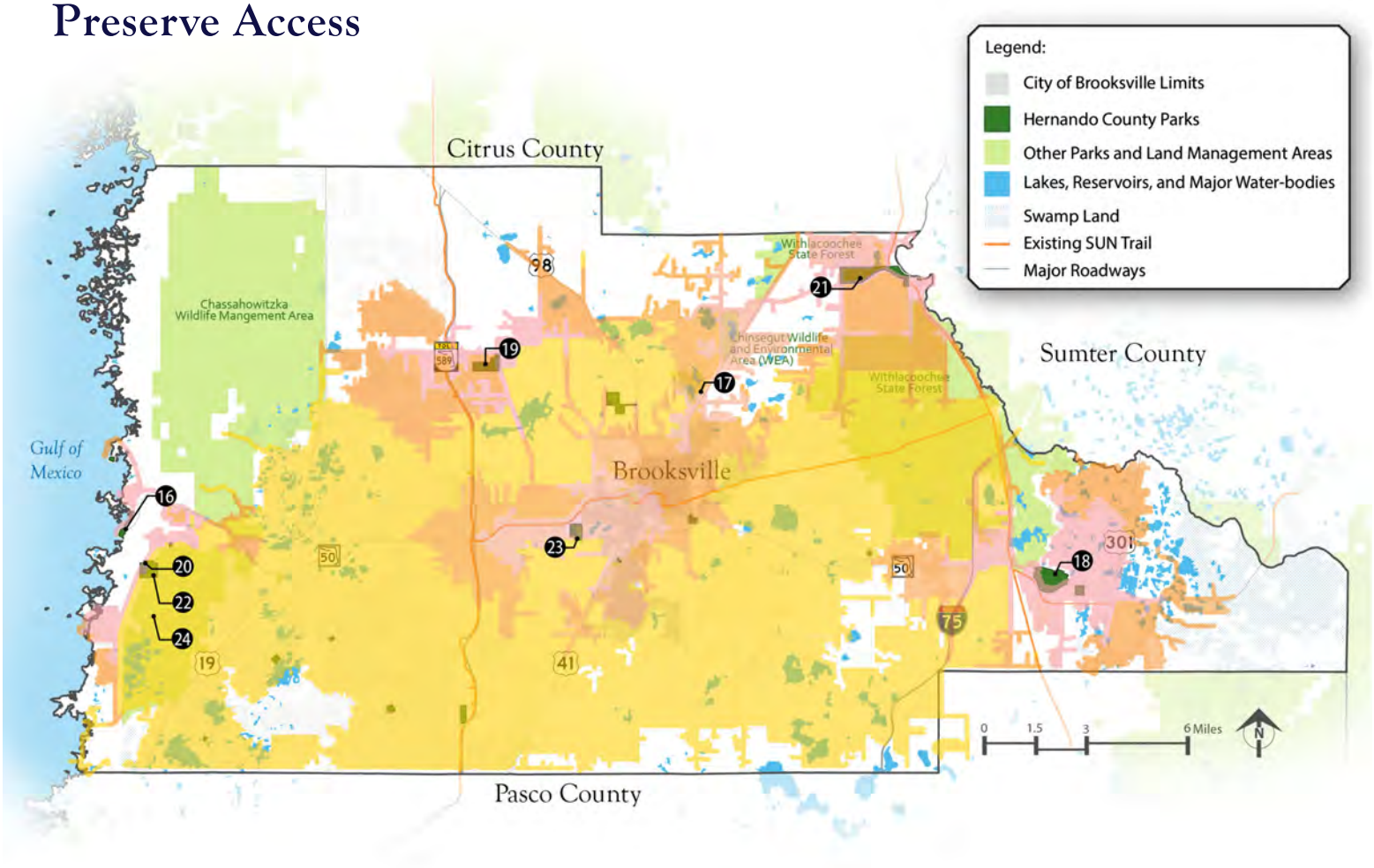
## Preserves

16. Bayport Park
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. Jenkins Creek Park
21. Lake Townsen Preserve
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 0.5 Miles
- 1 Miles
- 3 Miles
- 5 Miles
- 10 Miles

# Preserve Access




*Map A13: Level of Service Preserves*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. Nobleton Wayside Park
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. Rogers Park
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

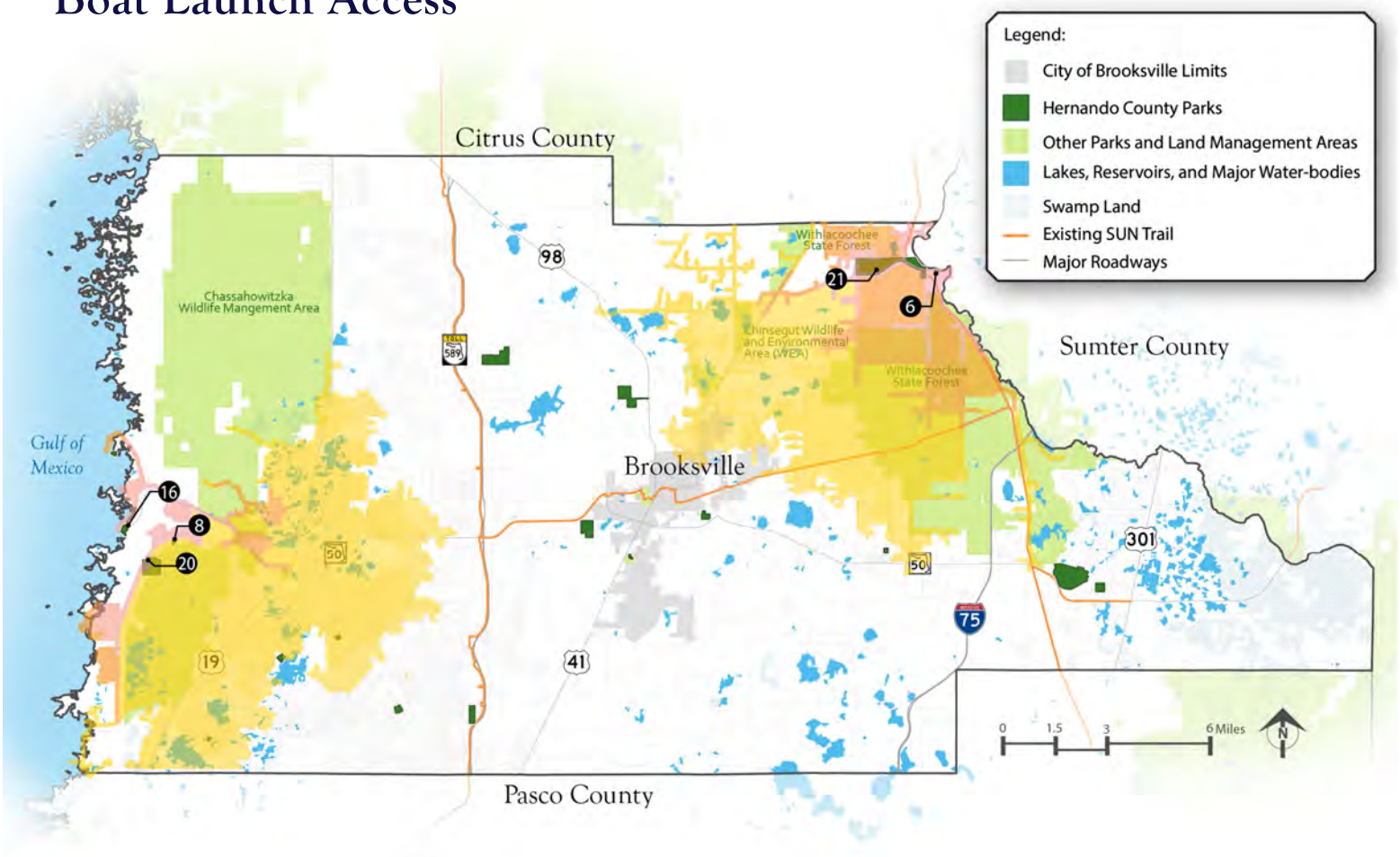
## Preserves

16. Bayport Park
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. Jenkins Creek Park
21. Lake Townsen Preserve
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 3 Miles
- 5 Miles
- 10 Miles

# Boat Launch Access




*Map A14: Level of Service Boat Access*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. **Nobleton Wayside Park**
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. **Rogers Park**
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

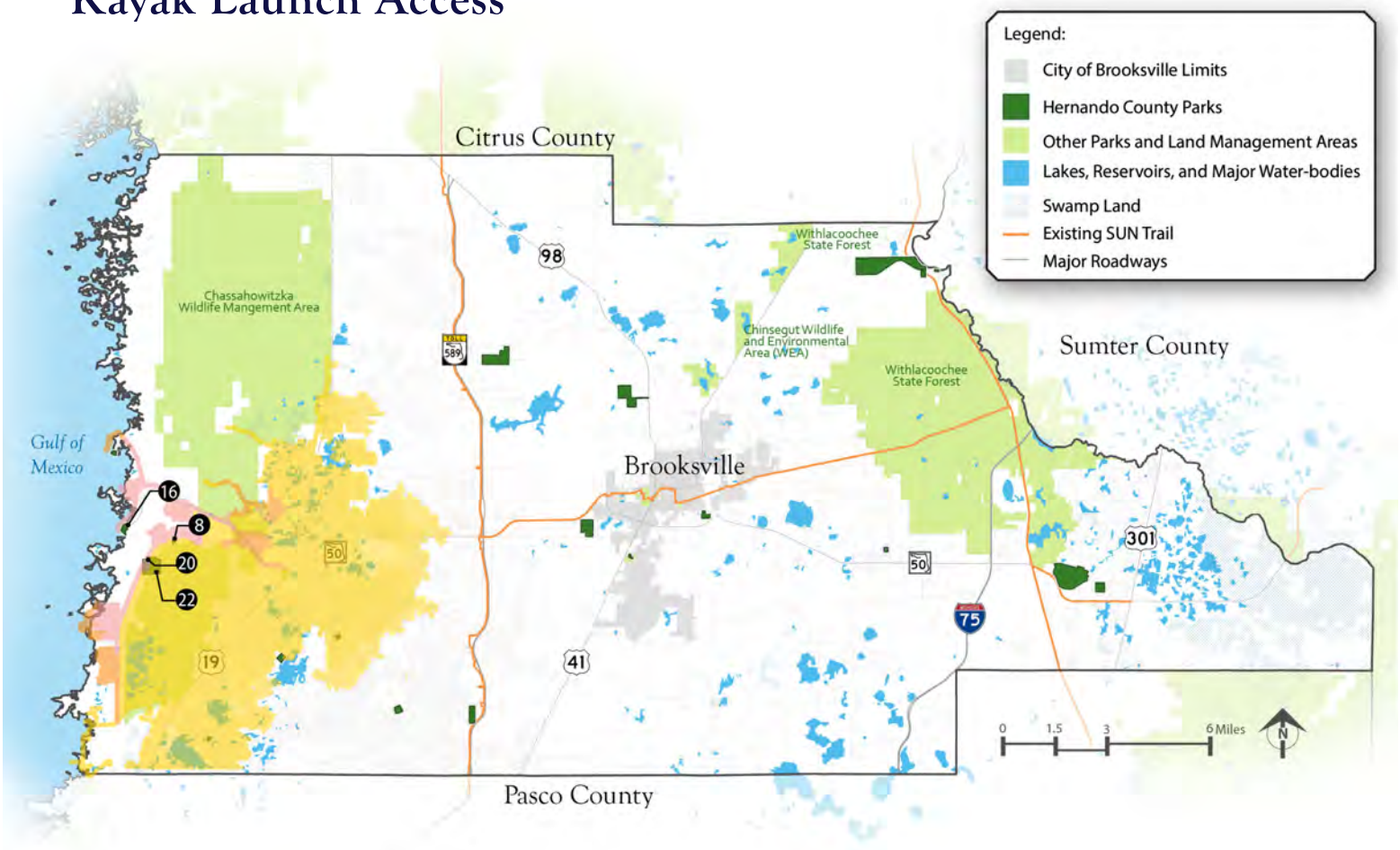
## Preserves

16. **Bayport Park**
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. **Jenkins Creek Park**
21. **Lake Townsen Preserve**
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 3 Miles
- 5 Miles
- 10 Miles

# Kayak Launch Access




*Map A15: Level of Service Kayak Launch Access*

## Neighborhood Parks

1. Alfred McKethan Pine Island Park
2. Earl & Francis Miller Memorial Gardens
3. Hill N Dale Community Park
4. Little Red School House Ballfield
5. Lonnie C. Coburn Park
6. Nobleton Wayside Park
7. Pioneer Park Skate Complex
8. Rogers Park
9. Rotary Centennial Park (Dog Park)

## Community Parks

10. Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park
11. Delta Woods Park
12. Veterans Memorial Park

## District Parks

13. Anderson Snow Sports Complex
14. Ernie Wever Youth Park
15. Ridge Manor Community Park

## Preserves

16. Bayport Park
17. Chinsegut Hill
18. Cypress Lakes Preserve
19. Fickett Hammock Preserve
20. Jenkins Creek Park
21. Lake Townsen Preserve
22. Linda Pedersen Park
23. Peck Sink Preserve
24. Weeki Wachi Preserve

Level of Service Distances Legend:

- 3 Miles
- 5 Miles
- 10 Miles

# Summary

LOS analyses are measurements intended to evaluate the existing park system through comparison or service area. As Hernando County continues to grow, it will be important to continue to invest in additional parkland and recreation facilities to maintain and improve LOS measurements.

## Based on the data:

- Hernando County is performing moderately well in terms of overall park acreage, but population clusters in places like Spring Hill may require more localized parkland investment.
- Facility distribution is functional but uneven, with opportunities to improve equitable access to a wider range of recreation features.
- Access to parks is good in more urbanized areas, but rural zones and areas with geographic barriers would benefit from better connectivity or additional facilities.

To maintain and improve LOS as the population grows, Hernando County should prioritize acquiring new parkland in high-density areas, diversify facility offerings, and enhance connectivity to underserved regions. These efforts will help ensure all residents have fair access to quality parks and recreation services.

*Jenkins Creek*

# Public Engagement

## Overview

Public engagement is essential to the planning process, ensuring that community voices shape the vision, priorities, and outcomes. It fosters transparency, trust, and early identification of concerns—leading to more inclusive, effective, and supported plans.

As digital platforms and social trends evolve, public engagement has expanded beyond in-person meetings to include online tools and virtual input. While technology enhances outreach and convenience, a multichannel approach—combining both traditional and digital methods—is key to reaching diverse audiences and ensuring digital equity.

Technology supports wider participation, real-time feedback, and data-informed decisions, but it must be thoughtfully applied. Clear goals, targeted outreach, and accessible systems help maximize its impact.

Effective engagement improves design quality, builds public trust, and reduces delays by addressing concerns early. It promotes community ownership and ensures that plans align with local values, sustainability goals, and lived experiences.

Meaningful involvement leads to better, more livable spaces. In the context of parks and recreation, this means creating vibrant, inclusive environments that reflect the needs of all Hernando County residents.

The following provides a brief overview of the public engagement activities conducted during development of the Hernando County Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP).

## Key Takeaways

- **Community involvement ensures that residents' needs and perspectives are integrated into park planning, fostering trust, transparency, and support for development initiatives.**
- **Hernando County uses a mix of in-person events, virtual meetings, and online surveys to reach diverse audiences, balancing accessibility with meaningful interaction.**
- **Stakeholders highlighted funding limitations, aging infrastructure, accessibility issues, and overcrowded facilities as key challenges. Opportunities include expanding recreational offerings, improving maintenance, and developing inclusive amenities like ADA-compliant playgrounds and trails.**
- **Residents emphasized maintaining existing parks, adding new facilities like splash pads and sports fields, enhancing accessibility, and connecting parks through trails. Nature-based activities and educational features were also highly valued.**
- **Feedback from focus groups, workshops, and surveys will guide the master plan's development. Future efforts will prioritize equitable access, improved maintenance, enhanced communication, and sustainable park designs to meet the growing needs of Hernando County's residents.**

*Online announcements for Public Engagement*

# Public Engagement Activities

To guide the development of the Master Plan, a comprehensive public engagement process was carried out. The goal was to gather diverse perspectives from across the community and ensure the final plan reflected both current needs and future aspirations. A variety of tools and events were used to connect with residents, staff, and stakeholders:

**Park and Facility Evaluations –** On-site reviews were conducted across the County's park system to assess the condition, functionality, and use of existing amenities.

**Staff Interviews and Focus Groups –** Parks and Recreation staff participated in guided discussions to share operational challenges, departmental goals, and opportunities for improvement.

**Virtual Focus Groups –** A series of online meetings brought together key user groups, community leaders, and partners to offer input on park usage and future programming.

**In-Person Community Workshops –** Public meetings provided an open forum for residents to share ideas, concerns, and aspirations related to parks, recreation, and open space.

**Pop-Up Events –** Informal engagement stations were set up at local events and public spaces to connect with residents in a casual setting and gather on-the-spot feedback.

**Statistically Valid Survey –** A scientifically representative survey captured input from a randomized sample of households to provide accurate data on resident needs and preferences.

**Online Community Survey –** An open digital survey invited broader community participation, allowing more residents to weigh in on priorities and experiences.

**Project Kickoff**
August 27, 2024

**Park + Facility Evaluations**
November 5-8, 2024

**Staff Interviews + Focus Groups**
December 4-5, 2024

**In-Person Community Workshops**
February 12, 2025

**Virtual Focus Groups**
December 10, 2024
January 16, 2025

**Pop-Up Event #1**
March 8, 2025

**Pop-Up Event #2**
March 14, 2025

**Pop-Up Event #3**
April 5, 2025

**Statistically Valid Survey**
March 17, 2025 - April 11, 2025

*Pop-Up Event at Brooksville Live*

*Pop-Up Event at Swamp Fest*

*Pop-Up Event at Swamp Fest*

*Public Engagement Workshop #1*

*Public Engagement Workshop #1*

**Online Survey**
December 9, 2024 - March 4, 2025

**Vision Workshop**
August 13, 2025

**BOCC Presentation**
January 13, 2026

**Open House**
December 3, 2025

**BOCC Needs Assessment Presentation**
July 22, 2025

# Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews provided valuable insight into the current strengths, challenges, and opportunities within Hernando County's parks and recreation system. Participants expressed strong support for the department's responsiveness and community programming but emphasized that increased resources are necessary to maintain and expand services as the population grows.

# Focus Groups

Four (4) focus groups were held as part of the Hernando County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, generating meaningful insights about current conditions and community priorities. Participants emphasized the importance of well-maintained, accessible, and inclusive parks that reflect the diverse needs of the County's growing population. Consistent maintenance, infrastructure upgrades, and equitable investment in all areas of the County were recurring themes throughout the discussions.

**Key themes from stakeholder and focus group interviews included:**

1. Need for more and improved sports fields and facilities — 30 mentions
   - Consistently cited across nearly every interview and focus group.
   - Specific calls for more baseball, softball, soccer, multipurpose fields, better lighting, and maintenance improvements.
   - Emphasis on addressing capacity issues and growth in youth sports.

2. Maintenance, staffing, and upkeep challenges — 25 mentions
   - Many noted insufficient staff, poor maintenance of restrooms and fields, and the need for more preventive care.
   - Comments about facilities being outdated or in disrepair and a desire to "take care of what we have before building new."

3. Parking and access issues (including capacity and ADA accessibility) — 20 mentions
   - Widespread concern about lack of parking at popular parks (e.g., Rogers Park, Pine Island).
   - Repeated mentions of inadequate ADA access and general access improvements.

4. Funding and budget limitations — 18 mentions
   - Frequent references to the budget being inadequate to support operations, maintenance, and new projects.
   - Discussion about relying on public-private partnerships (P3), community sponsorships, and alternative funding mechanisms.

5. Equity and community inclusion in park facilities and programming — 15 mentions
   - Emphasis on underserved areas (e.g., South Brooksville, Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Park).
   - Request for more equitable distribution of amenities, programs, and attention to all neighborhoods

These conversations demonstrated a strong community interest in supporting and improving the parks system. Participants were eager for long-term investments that prioritize equity, safety, sustainability, and collaborative partnerships to meet the future recreational needs of Hernando County.

*Cypress Lake Preserve*

*Public Engagement Workshop #1*

*Public Engagement Workshop #1*

# Community Workshops

As part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan process, Hernando County hosted both in-person and virtual community workshops to gather resident input on park usage, improvement priorities, and future needs. The in-person workshop was held on February 12, 2025, at the Utilities Department Training Room in Brooksville. After a brief presentation, attendees visited interactive stations to share feedback on topics ranging from favorite parks to desired amenities and recreational opportunities. A virtual workshop, held on February 26, 2025, extended access to those unable to attend in person and focused on evaluating system-wide challenges, needs, and opportunities.

*Public Engagement Workshop #1*

*Public Engagement Workshop #1*

Community feedback from these events emphasized the following key themes:

- Top parks and amenities mentioned included Delta Woods, Pine Island, Bayport, and Veterans Memorial, with trails, kayaking, playgrounds, and cultural events most appreciated.
- Desired improvements ranged from more restrooms and shaded splash pads to trail signage, educational displays, and accessible play equipment.
- Popular activities included kayaking, walking trails, birdwatching, pickleball, and community gardens; additional beach access and swim classes for seniors were also requested.
- Priorities for investment focused on maintaining existing parks and trails, acquiring land for passive recreation, and creating facilities adaptable to community needs.
- Equity and access issues were frequently discussed, including distance to parks, ADA accessibility, and the need to address underserved areas and aging infrastructure.
- Maintenance and safety were highlighted as ongoing concerns; participants called for improved upkeep and increased staffing.
- Communication and engagement were seen as critical to long-term success, with residents expressing interest in more updates, volunteer opportunities, and clearer channels for feedback.

Together, the workshops provided valuable insight into resident values and expectations, reinforcing the need for equitable access, quality maintenance, and strategic investment in Hernando County's park system. Feedback from these sessions directly informed the master plan's goals and implementation strategies.

*Pop-Up Event at Brooksville Live*

*Pop-Up Event at Swamp Fest*

*Pop-Up Event at United Way Kickball Tournament*

# Online Survey

An online public opinion survey was completed by 740 respondents between December 2024 and March 2025. Approximately 94.2%, or 697 respondents were Hernando County residents. The survey included 35 questions across a spectrum of topics from park usage, satisfaction, access, needs, priorities, funding support and demographic topics. Survey results are statistically valid with a margin-of-error of +/-3.7% at a level of confidence of 95%.

Demographics of survey participants were consistent with Hernando County demographics in the following characteristics (American Community Survey vs. online survey participants):

- Percentage of population over age 75 (3.9% vs. 12.2%)
- Percentage of households with a member who has a disability (23.8% vs. 14%)
- Hispanic/Latino households (11.6% vs. 16.1%)
- Black households (3.8% vs. 4.9%)

Under/over sampled demographics included:

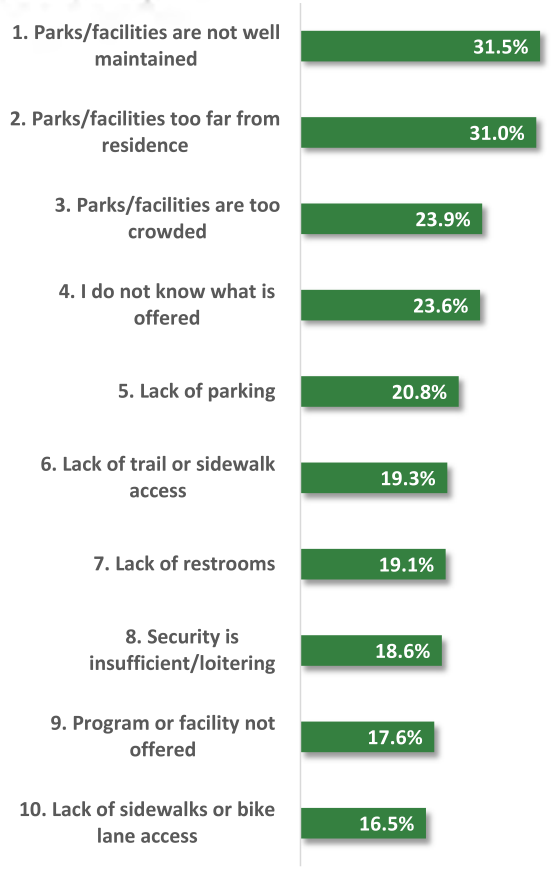
- Number of households with children under age 18 (49.7% vs. 25.1%)
- Percentage of population between ages 25-55 (94.6% vs. 40.8%)
- Ages 19-24 (1.9% vs. 4.6%)

The following pages highlight a selection of results. A complete summary of survey results is included in Appendix L.

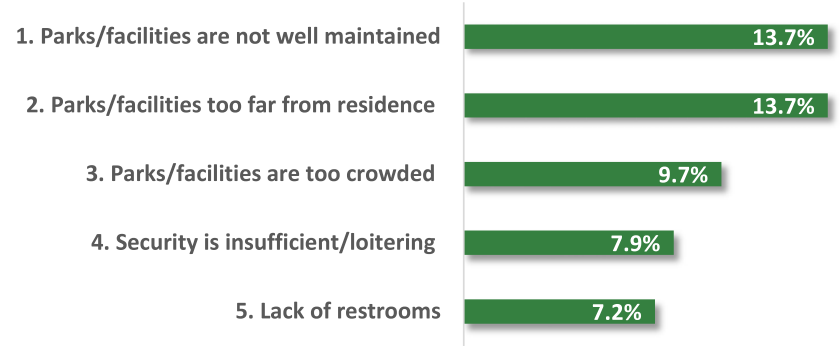
# Online Survey Results

## Q: Reasons that prevent you or other members of your household from visiting parks or participating in recreation programs and events in Hernando County more often.

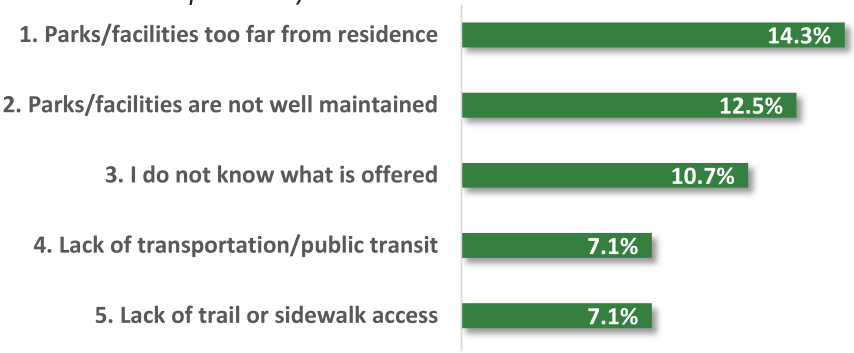
The top ten reasons that prevent visiting parks or participating in recreation activities or programs in Hernando County are: *(Note: Percent of all households)*



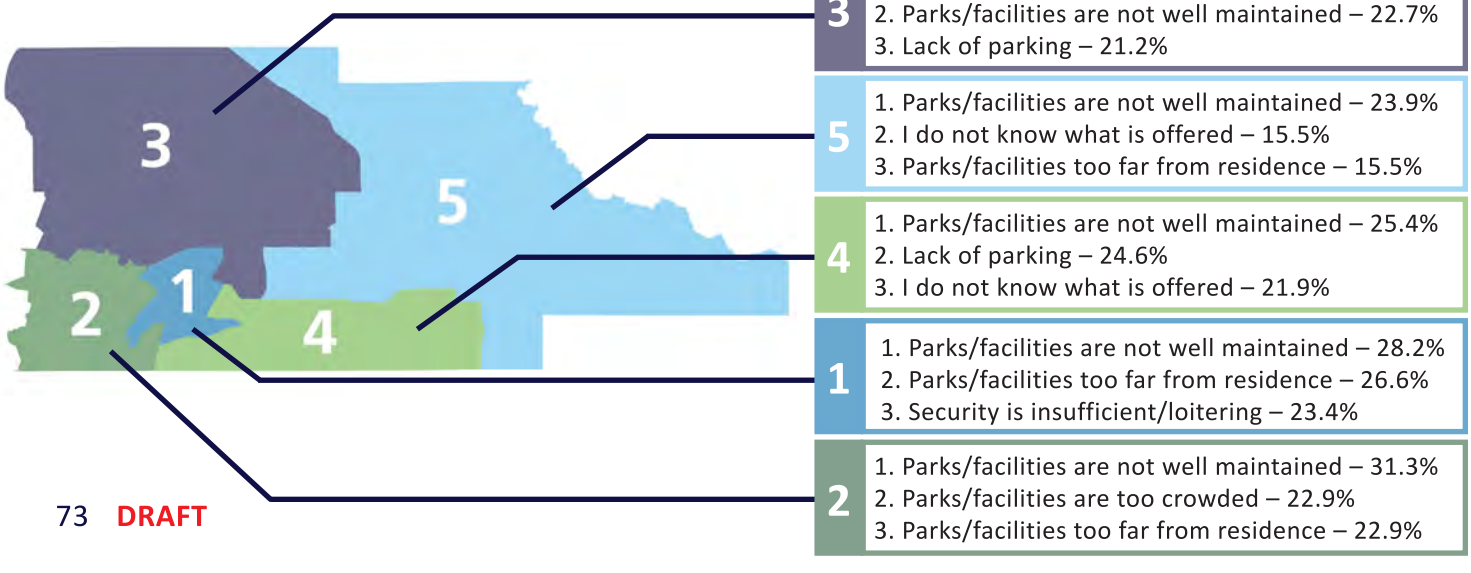

The #1 reason that prevents **households with children aged 18 or under** in Hernando County from visiting parks or participating in recreation activities or programs are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




The #1 reason that prevents Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** from visiting parks or participating in recreation activities or programs are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older and their top reason)*



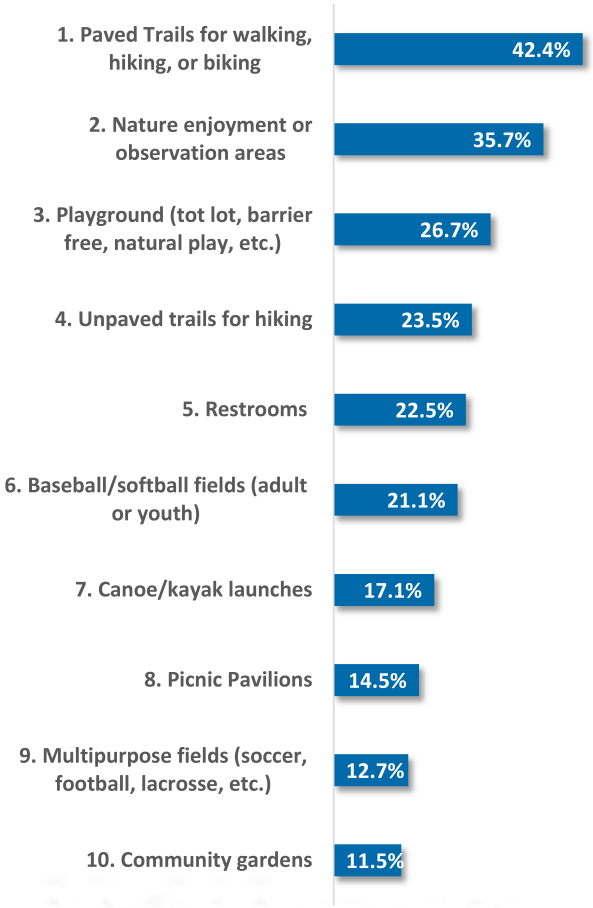

**Top 3 results by Commission District:**



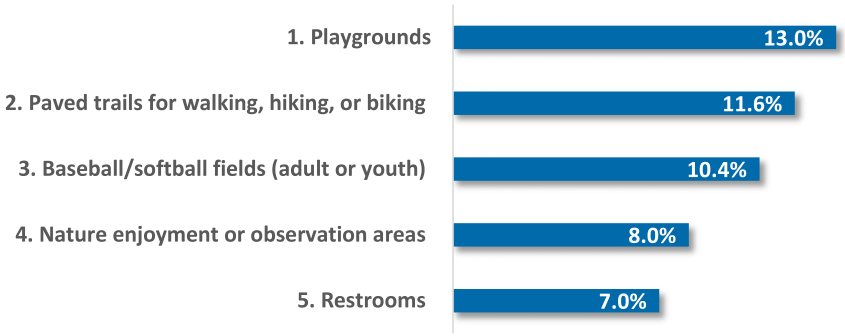
# Online Survey Results

## Q: Most used Hernando County park or recreation amenities:

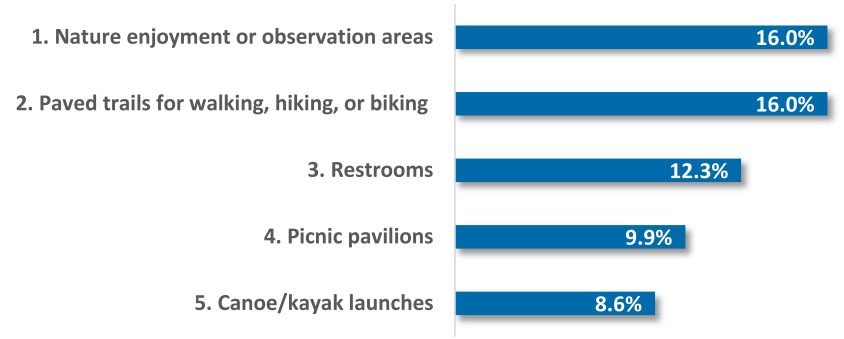
The top ten most used park and recreation amenities in Hernando County: *(Note: Percent of all households that use the amenity)*



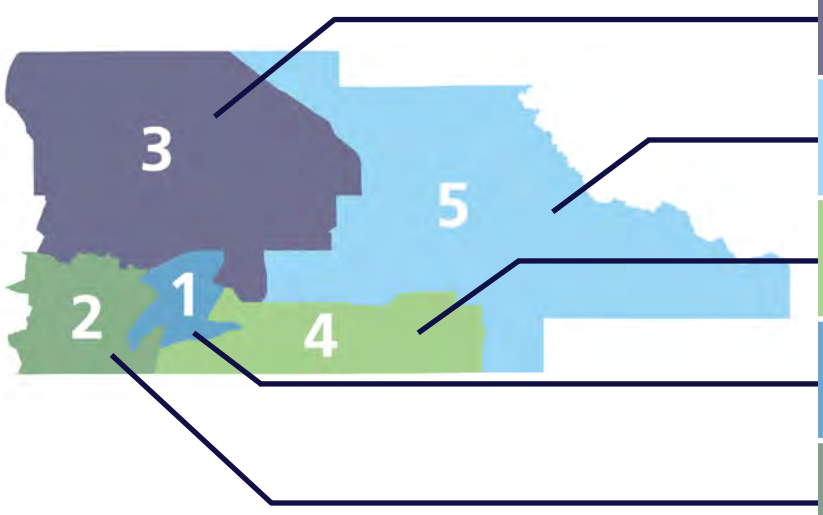

Most used park and recreation amenities in Hernando County for **households with children aged 18 or under** are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Most used park and recreation amenities in Hernando County by **residents aged 55 or older** are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*




**Top 3 results by Commission District:**




**3**
1. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 48.8%
2. Playground – 37.4%
3. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 32.0%

**5**
1. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 41.9%
2. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 41.3%
3. Unpaved trails for hiking – 29.7%

**4**
1. Baseball/softball fields – 40.4%
2. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 37.7%
3. Playground – 34.2%

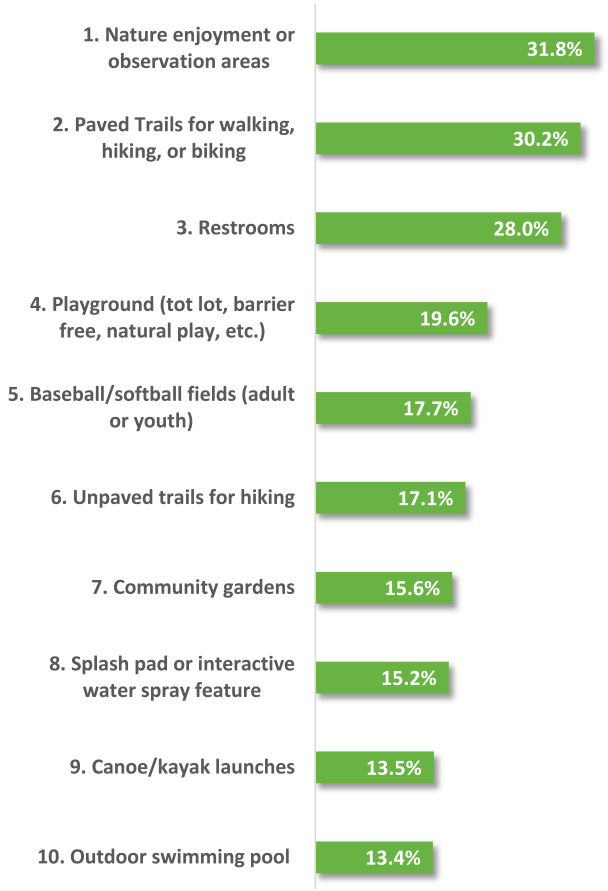
**1**
1. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 43.5%
2. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 42.7%
3. Baseball/softball fields (adult or youth) – 30.6%

**2**
1. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 48.2%
2. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 45.8%
3. Unpaved trails for hiking – 33.7%

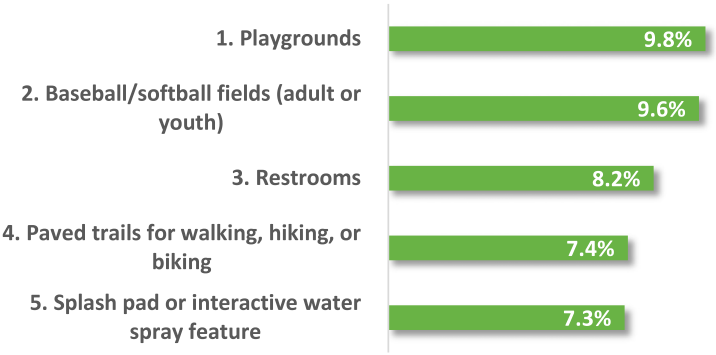
# Online Survey Results

## Q: Most Important Hernando County park or recreation amenities that residents have an unmet need:

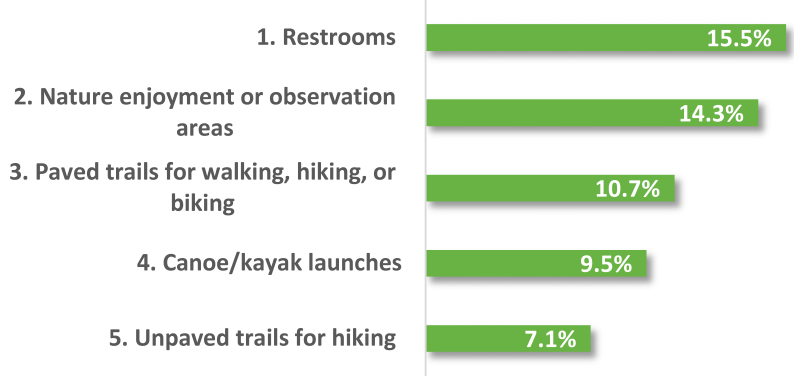
The top ten most important park and recreation amenities that Hernando County residents have an unmet need: *(Note: Percent of all households that have need)*




Most important park and recreation amenities with unmet need for Hernando County **households with children aged 18 or under** are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Most important park and recreation amenities with unmet need for Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*




**Top 3 results by Commission District:**

**3**
1. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 35.5%
2. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 32.5%
3. Restrooms – 32.5%

**5**
1. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 36.1%
2. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 29.0%
3. Restrooms – 26.5%

**4**
1. Baseball/softball fields (adult or youth) – 36.0%
2. Restrooms – 25.4%
3. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 22.8%

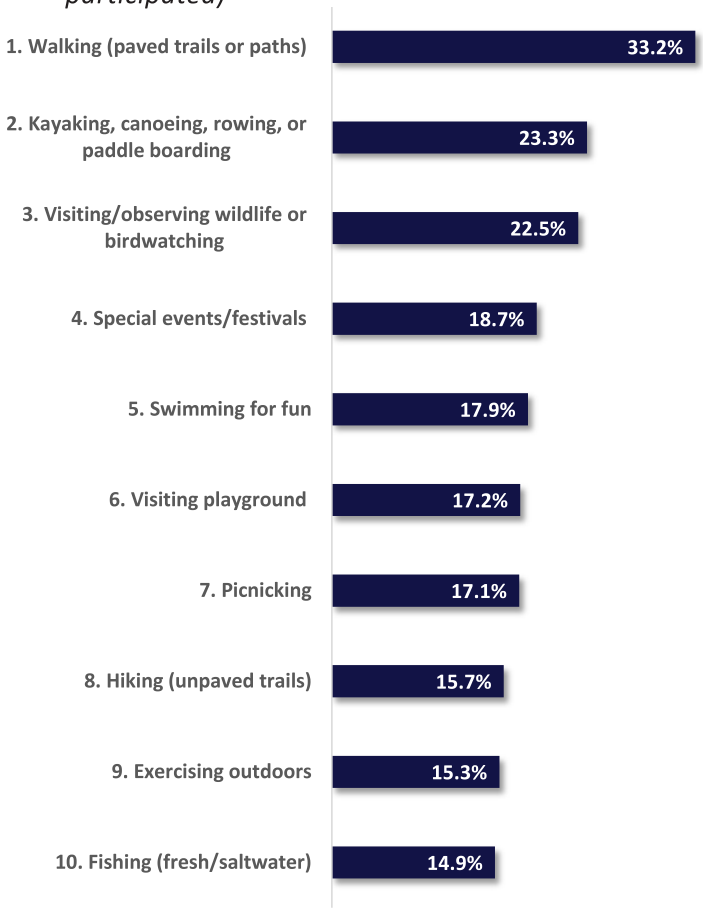
**1**
1. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 33.1%
2. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 33.1%
3. Baseball/softball fields (adult or youth) – 28.2%

**2**
1. Nature enjoyment or observation areas – 36.1%
2. Paved Trails for walking, hiking, or biking – 32.5%
3. Restrooms – 30.1%

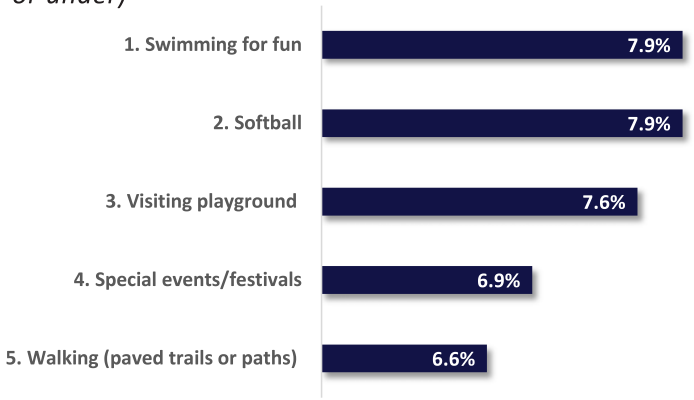
# Online Survey Results

## Q: Leisure activities that residents of Hernando County participate in most.

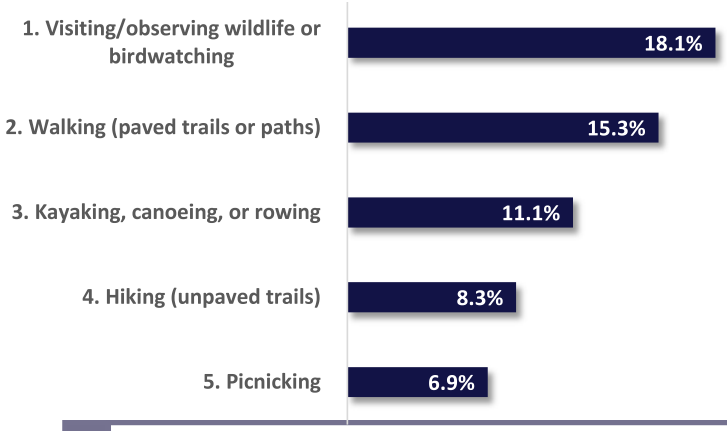
The top ten most popular leisure activities that Hernando County residents have participated: *(Note: Percent of all households that have participated)*



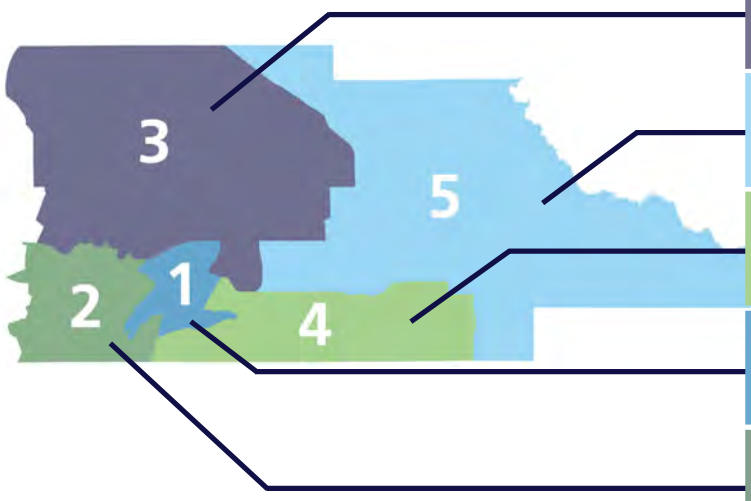

Most participated in leisure activities by Hernando County **households with children aged 18 or under** are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Most participated in leisure activities by Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** are: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*




**Top 3 results by Commission District:**




**3**
1. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 35.0%
2. Kayaking, canoeing, rowing, or paddle boarding – 25.1%
3. Visiting playground – 26.1%

**5**
1. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 30.3%
2. Visiting/observing wildlife or birdwatching – 24.5%
3. Kayaking, canoeing, rowing, or paddle boarding – 23.9%

**4**
1. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 36.8%
2. Softball – 26.3%
3. Picnicking – 23.7%

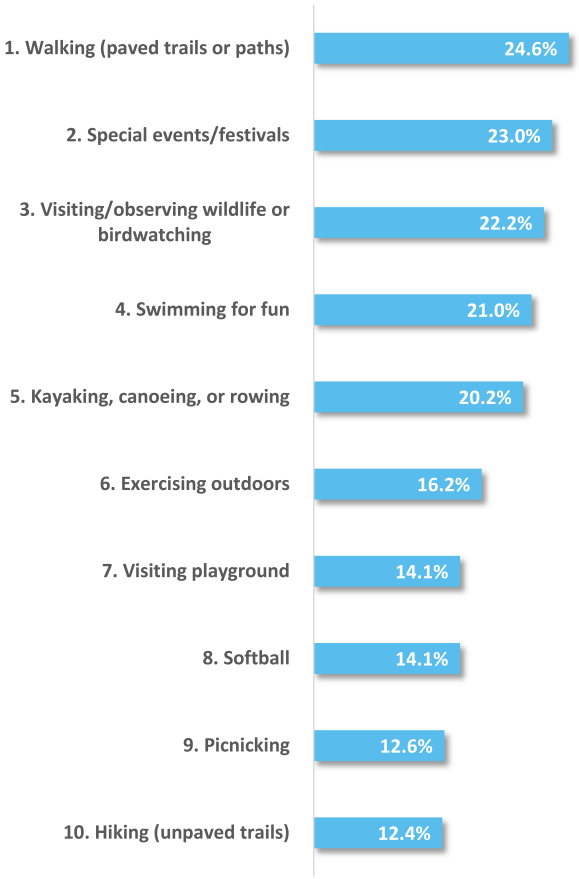
**1**
1. Walking (paved trails or paths) - 37.1%
2. Softball – 27.4%
3. Kayaking, canoeing, rowing, or paddle boarding – 26.6%

**2**
1. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 31.3%
2. Kayaking, canoeing, rowing, or paddle boarding – 30.1%
3. Visiting/observing wildlife or birdwatching – 28.9%

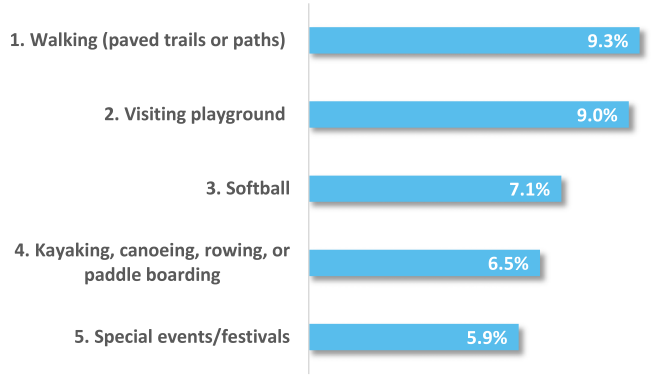
# Online Survey Results

## Q: Leisure activities that residents of Hernando County participate in most.

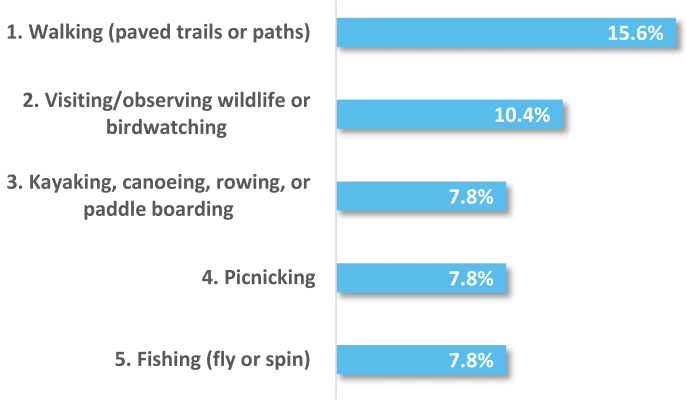
The top ten leisure activities that Hernando County residents have an unmet need to participate in more often: *(Note: Percent of all households that have an unmet need)*



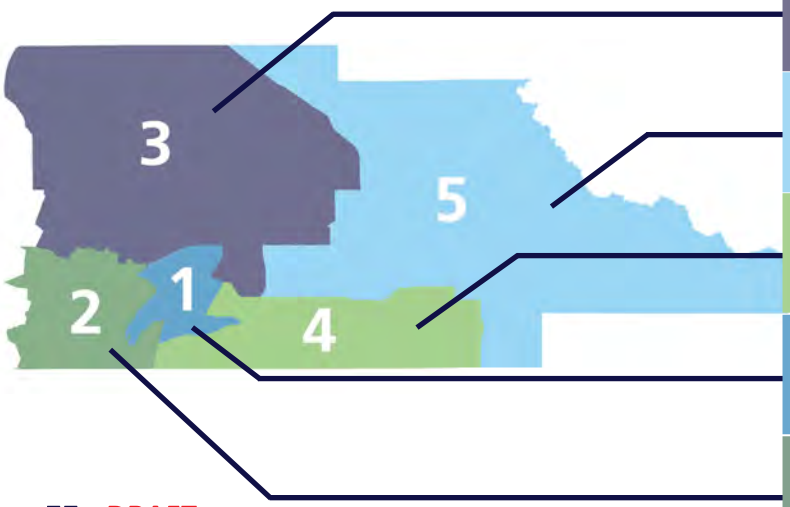

Top leisure activities that Hernando County households with **children aged 18 or under** have an unmet need to participate in more often: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Top leisure activities that Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** have an unmet need to participate in more often: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*




**Top 3 results by Commission District:**




**3**
1. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 29.6%
2. Swimming for fun – 26.1%
3. Visiting playground – 25.1%

**5**
1. Visiting/observing wildlife or birdwatching – 24.5%
2. Special events/festivals – 20.6%
3. Kayaking, canoeing, or rowing – 20.0%

**4**
1. Softball – 28.9%
2. Special events/festivals – 24.6%
3. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 24.6%

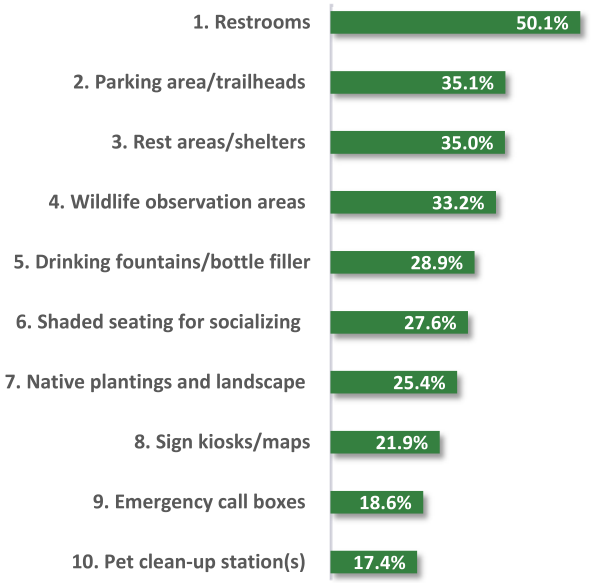
**1**
1. Softball – 28.2%
2. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 28.2%
3. Special events/festivals – 26.6%

**2**
1. Visiting/observing wildlife or birdwatching – 38.6%
2. Kayaking, canoeing, or rowing – 30.1%
3. Walking (paved trails or paths) – 26.5%

# Online Survey Results - Trails

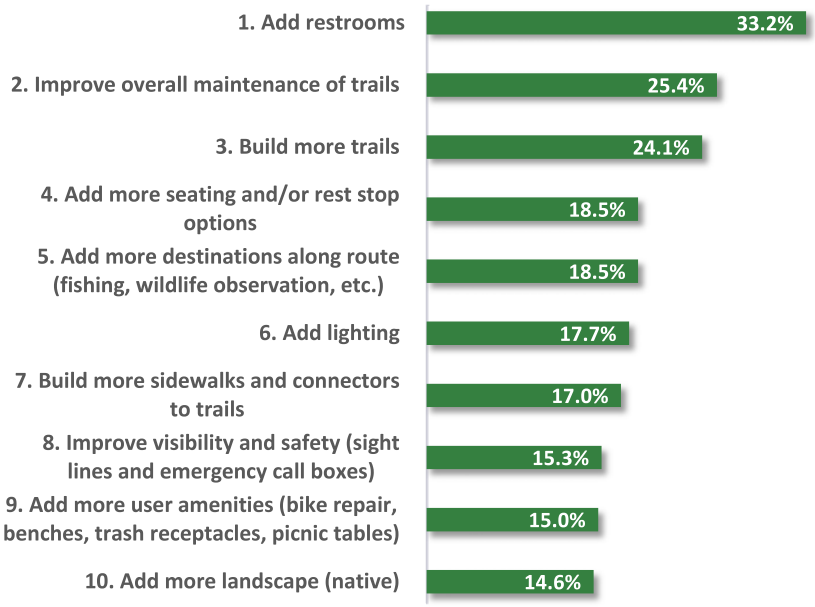
## Q: What amenities do you desire most along green ways and trails?

The top ten amenities Hernando County residents desire along green ways and trails: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*




## Q: Which improvements to greenway and trails are most important to you and your household?

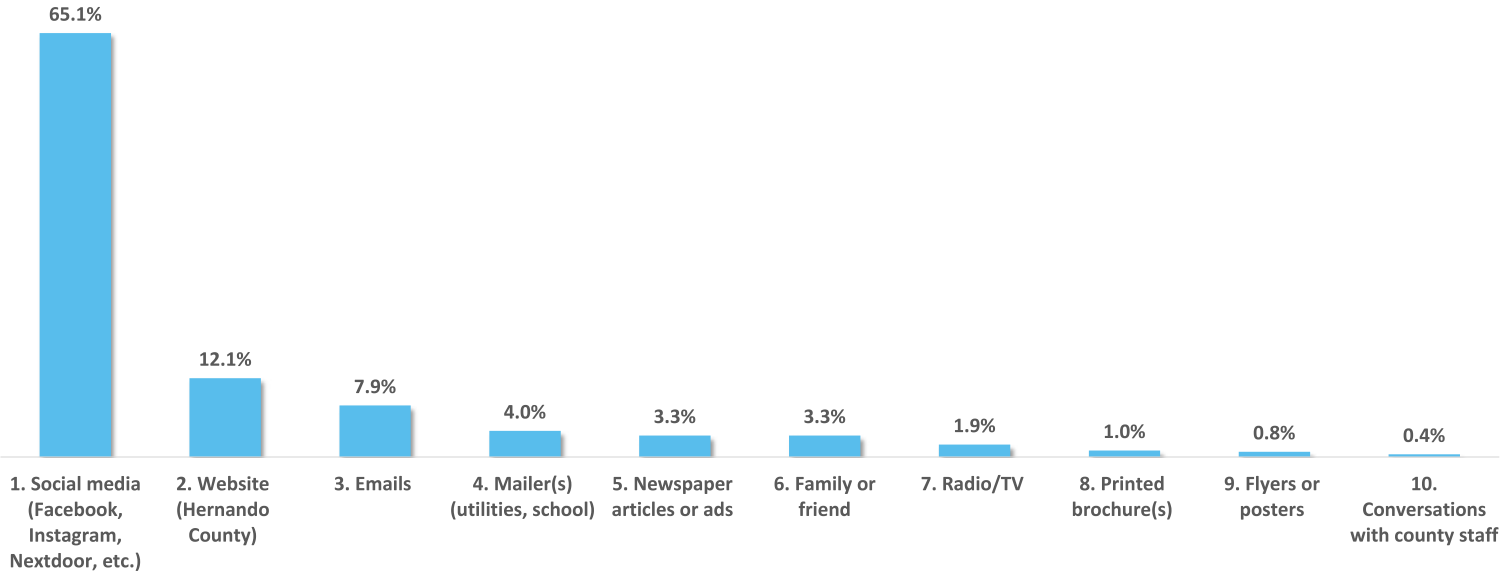
The top ten improvements Hernando County residents desire along green ways and trails: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*




# Online Survey Results - Communication

## Q: How do you like to learn about recreation programs, events, or classes provide by Hernando County?

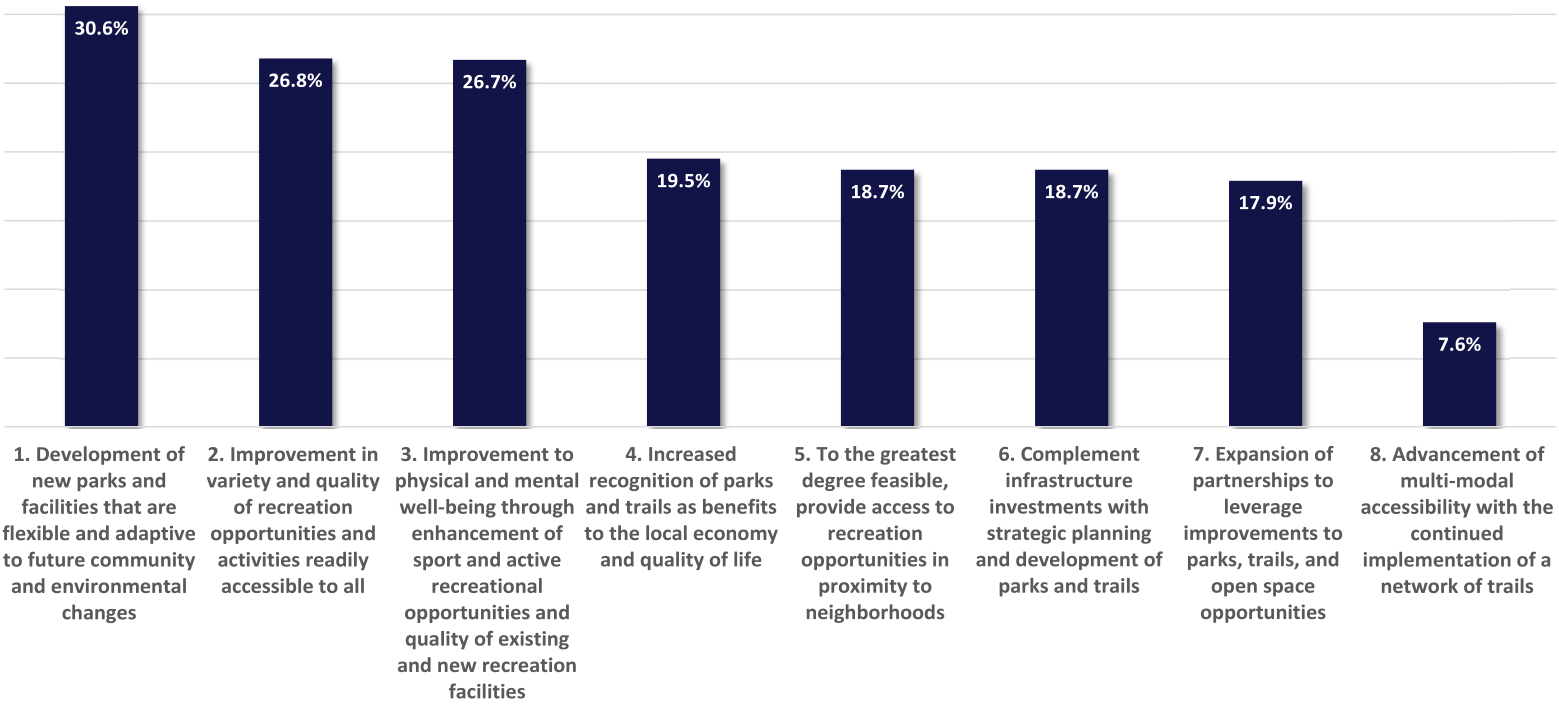
The top ten types of communication Hernando County residents prefer to learn about recreation programs, events or classes: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*



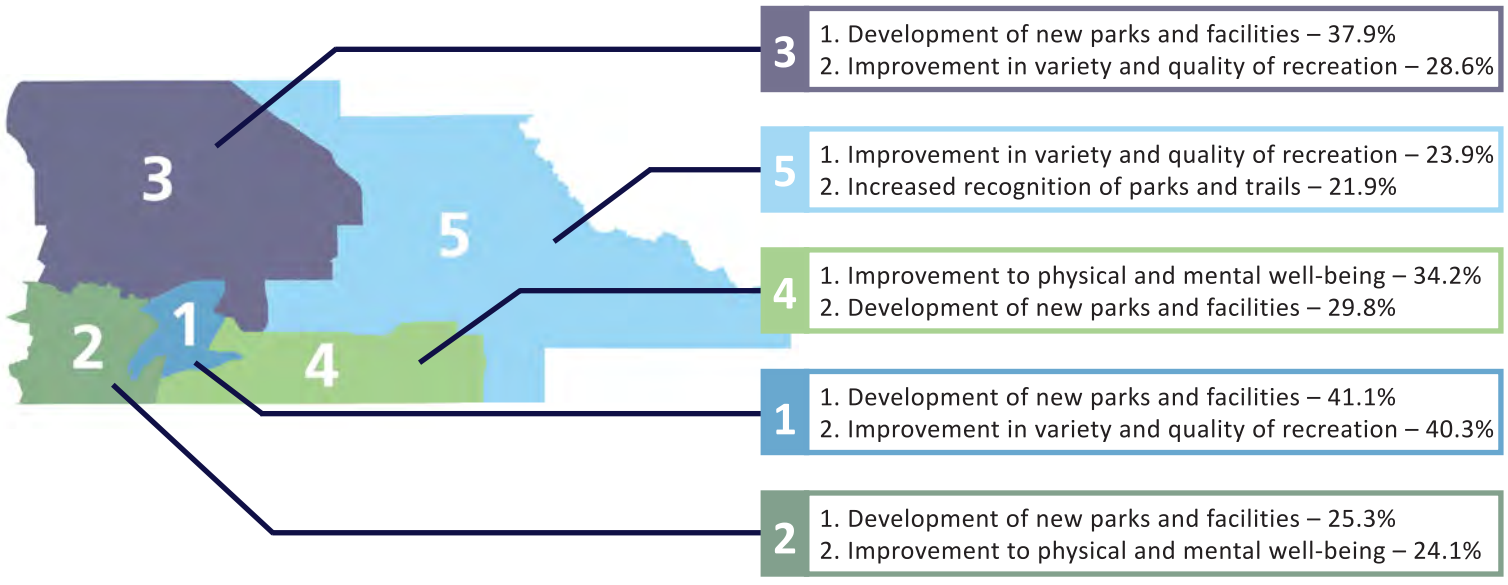
# Online Survey Results - Priorities

## Q: What are the most important outcomes you would like to see from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The top eight most important outcomes Hernando County residents would like from this Parks and Recreation Master Plan: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*



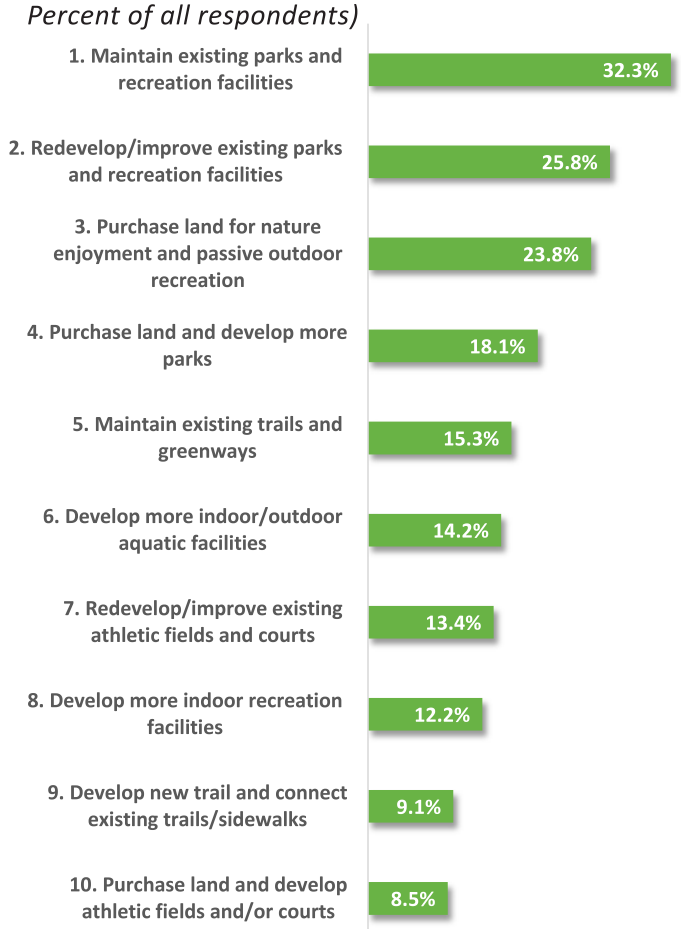

The **top two most important outcomes** Hernando County residents would like from this Parks and Recreation Master Plan by Commission District: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*



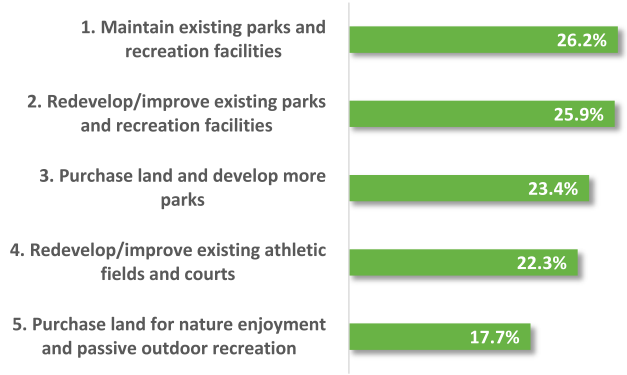
# Online Survey Summary - Priorities

## Q: What are the top actions Hernando County could take that you would support with your tax dollars?

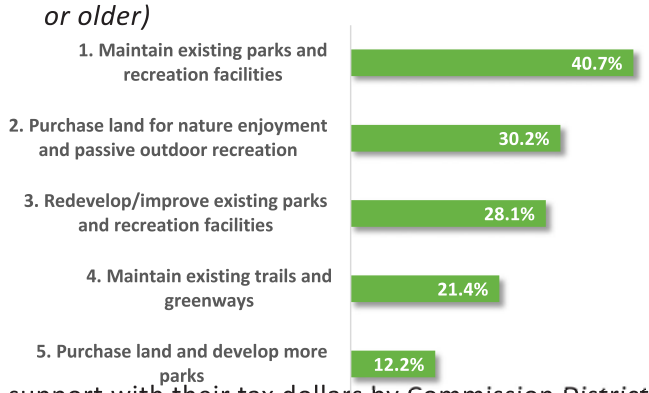
The top ten actions Hernando County residents would support with their tax dollars: *(Note: Percent of all respondents)*




Top five actions Hernando County **households with children aged 18 or under** would support with their tax dollars: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Top five actions Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** would support with their tax dollars: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*




The **top two actions** Hernando County residents would support with their tax dollars by Commission District: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*

**3**
1. Maintain existing parks and recreation facilities – 35.0%
2. Purchase land and develop more parks – 27.1%

**5**
1. Maintain existing parks and recreation facilities – 31.0%
2. Redevelop/improve existing parks and recreation facilities – 25.8%

**4**
1. Maintain existing parks and recreation facilities – 30.7%
2. Redevelop/improve existing parks and recreation facilities – 28.9%

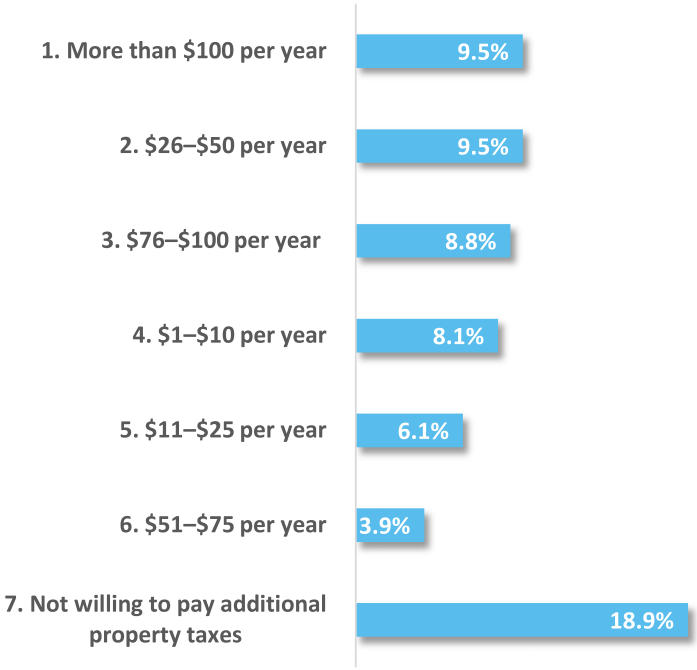
**1**
1. Redevelop/improve existing parks and recreation facilities – 29.0%
2. Purchase land for nature enjoyment and passive outdoor recreation – 26.6%

**2**
1. Maintain existing parks and recreation facilities – 47.0%
2. Purchase land for nature enjoyment and passive outdoor recreation – 33.7%

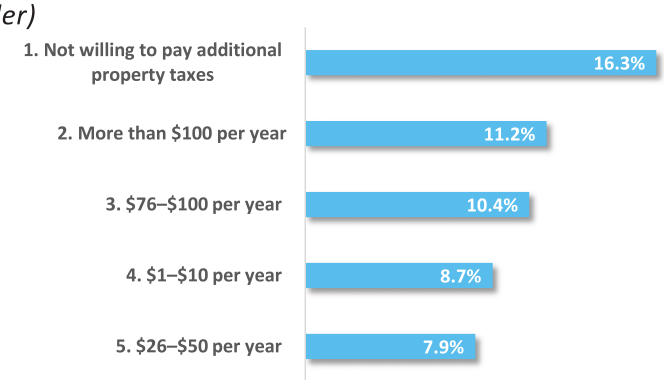
# Online Survey Summary - Priorities

## Q: How much would you be willing to support in additional taxes for the actions to improve Hernando County parks, recreation, trails and open spaces you most support?

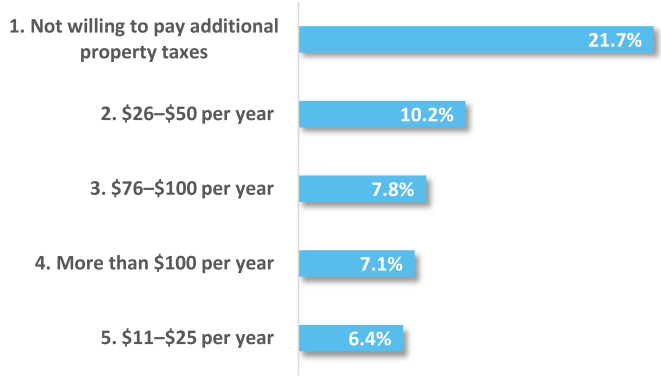
The top amounts Hernando County residents would support in additional taxes: *(Note: Percent of all respondents)*



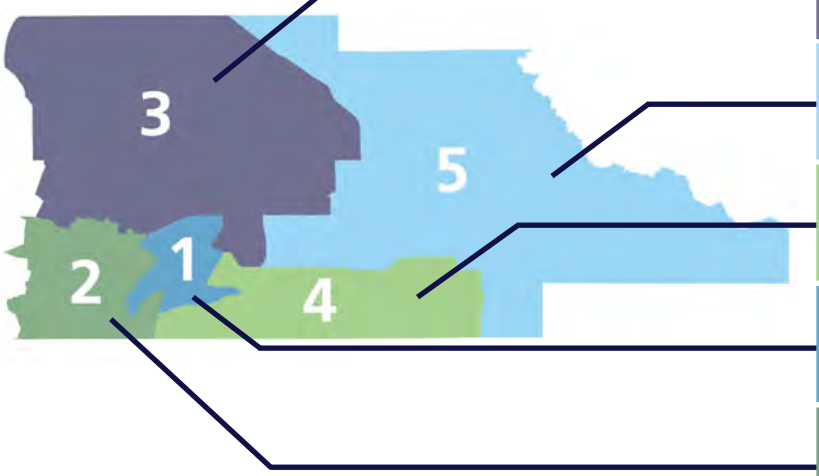

Top five amounts Hernando County **households with children aged 18 or under** would support in additional taxes: *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Top five amounts Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** would support in additional taxes: *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*




The top two amounts Hernando County residents would support in additional taxes and willingness for additional taxes to support parks, recreation, trails and open spaces by Commission District: (Note: Percent of all respondents):




**3** **84.2% willingness for additional taxes to support parks**
1. $76–$100 per year – 9.9%
2. More than $100 per year – 9.9% (tie)

**5** **77.4% willingness for additional taxes to support parks**
1. More than $100 per year – 9.0%
2. $76–$100 per year – 5.2%

**4** **82.5% willingness for additional taxes to support parks**
1. More than $100 per year – 11.4%
2. $76–$100 per year – 9.6%

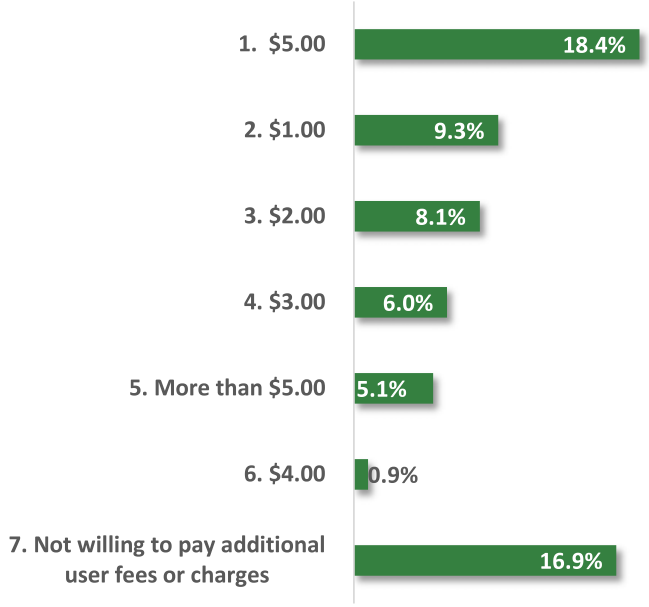
**1** **78.2% willingness for additional taxes to support parks**
1. $76–$100 per year – 11.3%
2. More than $100 per year – 9.7%

**2** **81.9% willingness for additional taxes to support parks**
1. $76–$100 per year – 12.0%
2. More than $100 per year – 6.0%

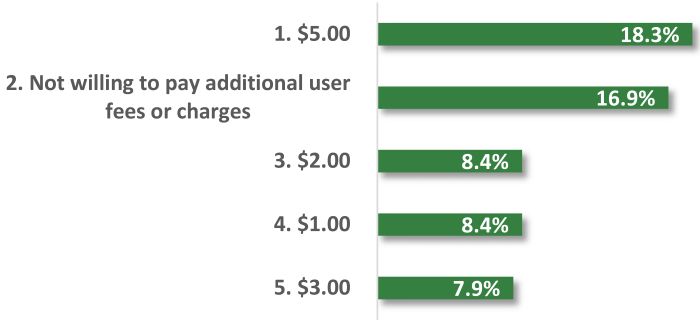
# Online Survey Summary - Priorities

## Q: How much would you be willing to support in additional user fees and/or charges [per person, per event/program] to support Hernando County parks, recreation, trails and open spaces?

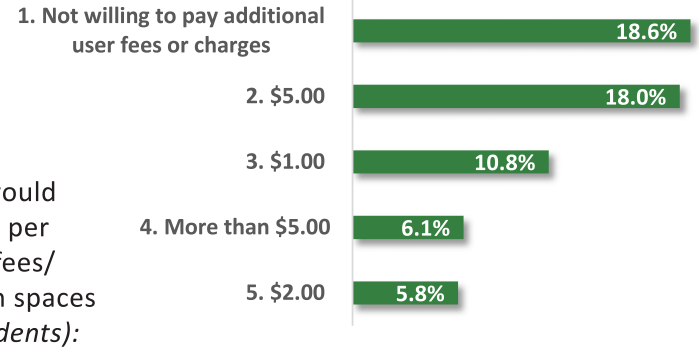
The top amounts Hernando County residents would support in additional user fees/charges, per person/per event or program: *(Note: Percent of all respondents)*



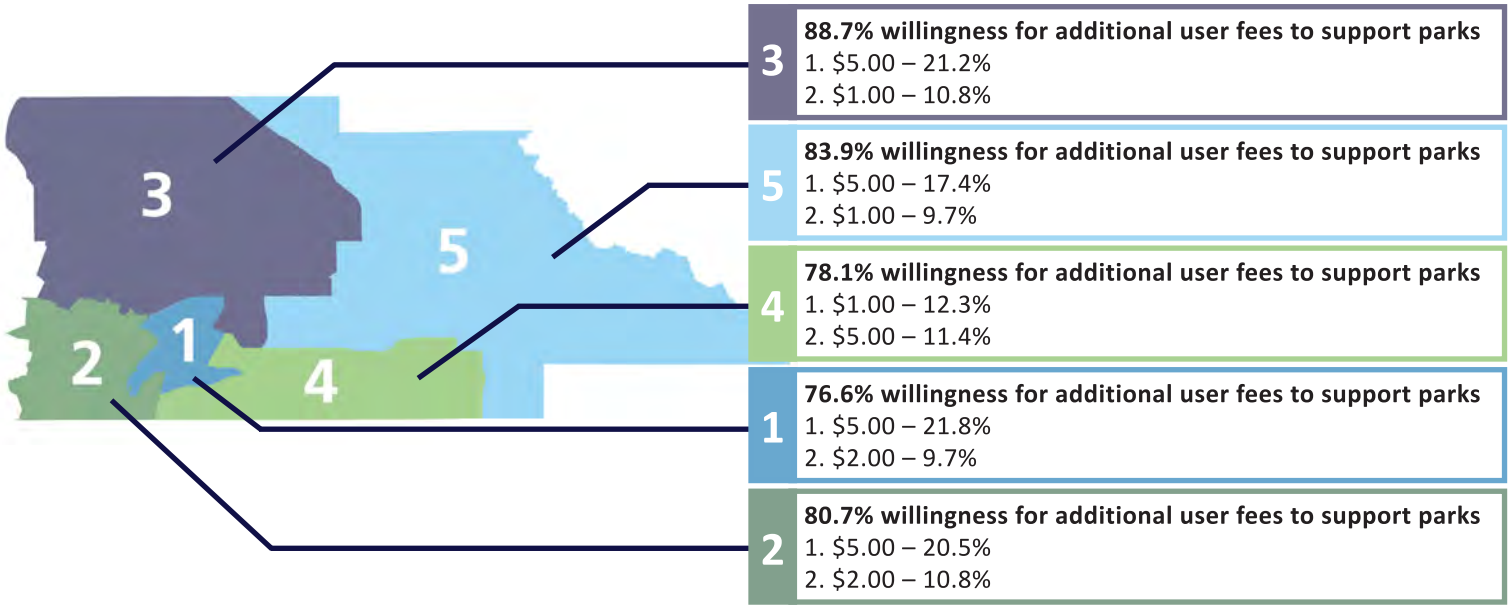

Top five amounts Hernando County **households with children aged 18 or under** would support in additional user fees/ charges (per person, per event/program): *(Note: Percentage of all households with children aged 18 or under)*




Top five amounts Hernando County **residents aged 55 or older** would support in additional user fees/charges (per person, per event/program): *(Note: Percentage of all households with member(s) aged 55 or older)*



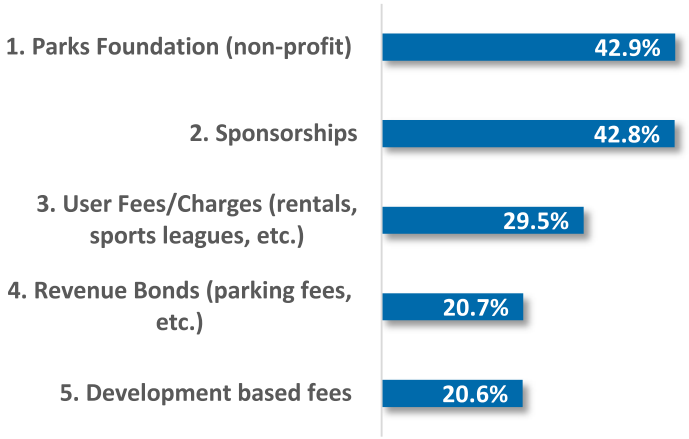

The **top two amounts** Hernando County residents would support in additional user fees/charges (per person, per event/program) and willingness for additional user fees/ charges to support parks, recreation, trails and open spaces by Commission District: *(Note: Percent of all respondents):*



# Online Survey Summary - Priorities

## Top alternative funding source for parks, recreation, trails, and open space that you support most.

Top five alternative funding sources: *(Note: Percent of all respondents)*



*Nobleton Wayside Park*

# Statistically Valid Survey

To collect reliable and representative input on parks and recreation needs, Hernando County partnered with ETC Institute to administer a comprehensive community survey in Spring 2025. The survey was designed to evaluate key topics such as facility usage, resident satisfaction, access to amenities, unmet needs, improvement priorities, and funding preferences.

Survey packets were mailed to a randomly selected sample of households across the county, with the option to respond by mail or online. To ensure the integrity of the data, online responses were verified against pre-selected household addresses, and follow-up outreach was conducted to encourage participation.

A total of 390 completed surveys were collected between March 17 and April 11, 2025. Only responses from verified Hernando County addresses were included in the final results. The sample size for this statistically valid data provides a margin of error of ±4.96% at the 95% confidence level, making the results a dependable reflection of community opinion.

Demographics of survey participants were consistent with Hernando County demographics in the following characteristics (American Community Survey vs. Statistically Valid Survey participants):

- Percentage of population over age 75 (3.9% vs. 12.0%)
- Hispanic/Latino households (11.6% vs. 18.0%)
- Black households (3.8% vs. 7.0%)

Under/over sampled demographics included:

- Number of households with children under age 18 (49.7% vs. estimated <30%)
- Percentage of population between ages 25-54 (94.6% vs. 47.0%)
- Ages 18-34 (20.0% vs. 15.0%)

Survey respondents expressed strong agreement that parks, trails, and recreational spaces provide important benefits to the Hernando County community. The most widely recognized benefits included improving physical health and fitness (90%), enhancing mental health and reducing stress (88%), and preserving open space and the environment (83%). These findings highlight how highly residents value access to outdoor spaces and their role in overall quality of life.

Despite the strong support for parks and recreation, satisfaction with the current quality of amenities and programming is relatively modest:

## Amenity Ratings:

- 39% of respondents rated the overall quality of parks and recreation amenities as “excellent” or “good”
- 3% of respondents have not visited any Hernando County parks and recreation amenities

## Program Ratings:

- 24% rated the quality of county programs (e.g., sports, camps, nature, cultural activities) as “excellent” or “good”
- 31% of respondents have not participated in any Hernando county parks and recreation programs

Nationally, these ratings for overall quality typically reach 82% and 85%, respectively, placing Hernando County well below average.

While only a small number of respondents had not visited parks or participated in programs, many cited barriers such as poor maintenance, distance from home, and lack of interesting amenities or programming as reasons for limited use. Residents primarily learn about recreation opportunities through social media (76%), word of mouth (64%), and the County website (45%), suggesting that improvements in communication and outreach could increase engagement.

A majority of respondents (73%) indicated there are not enough parks or green spaces within walking distance, though 71% said they would be willing to walk up to 10 minutes to access one. These findings suggest a demand for more conveniently located parks and improved connectivity through trails and neighborhood access points.

The following pages highlight a selection of results. A complete summary of survey results is included in Appendix M.

*Rogers Park*

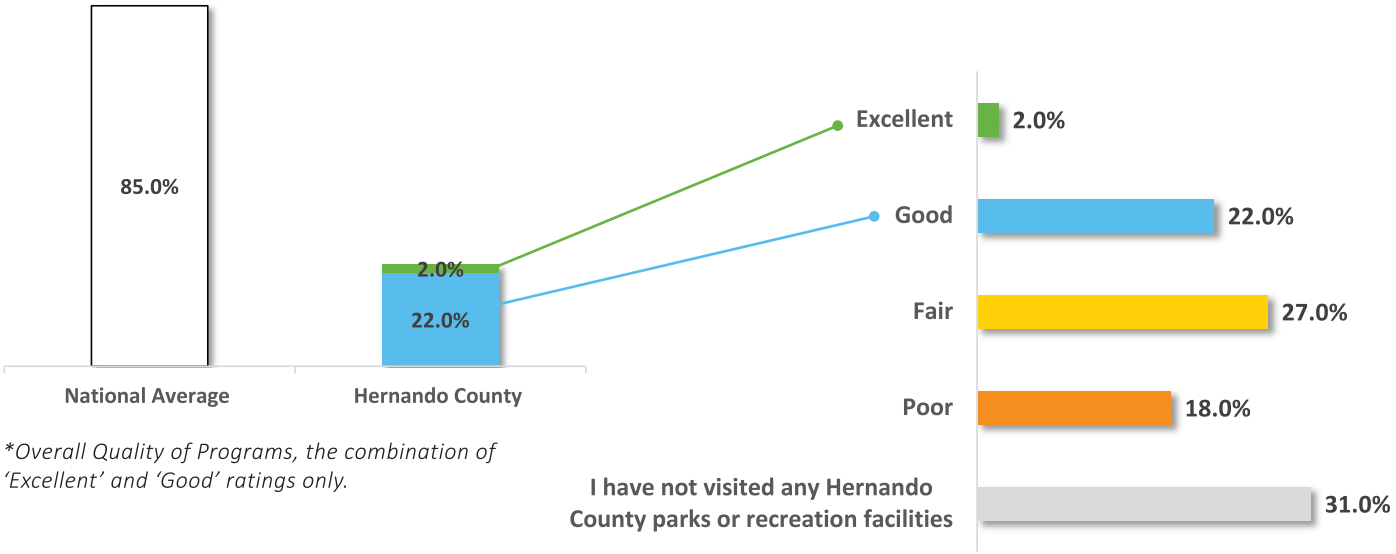
*Peck Sink Preserve*

# Statistically Valid Survey Results

## Q: How would you rate the overall quality of parks and/or recreation amenities offered by Hernando County that you and members of your household have visited?

**Overall Quality of Programs, the combination of 'Excellent' and 'Good' ratings only.*

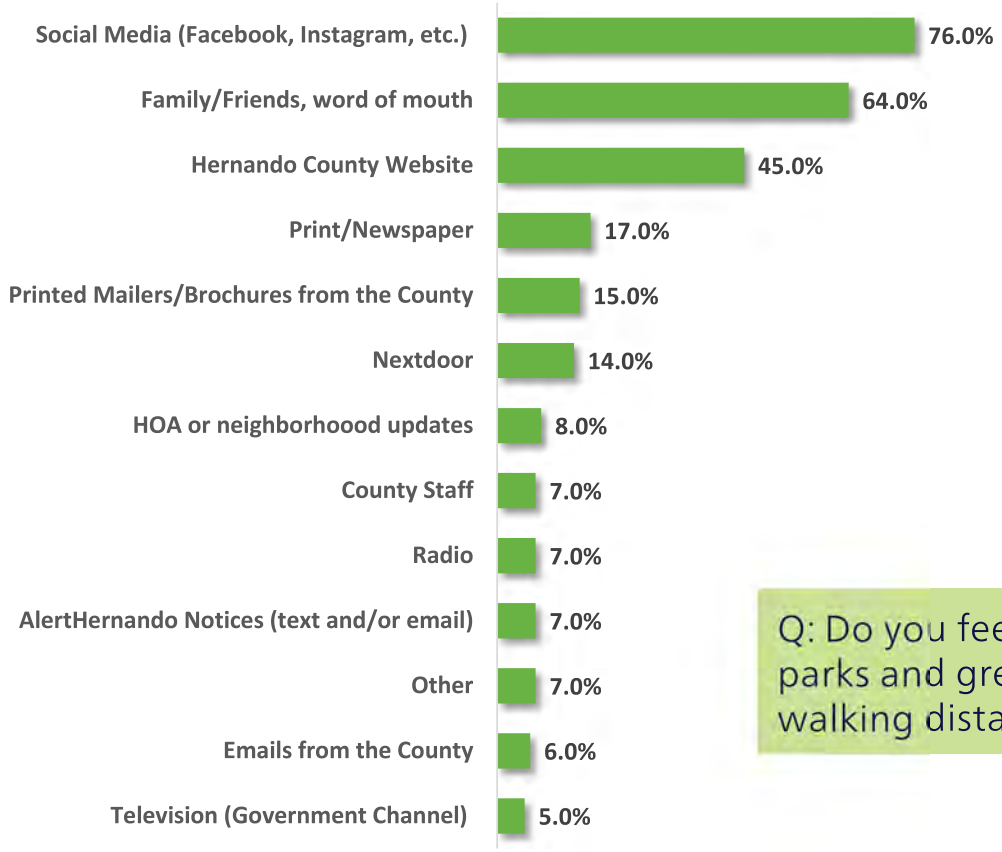
## Q: How would you rate the overall quality of the programs (Sports, Recreation, Camps, Nature, Historic, Etc.) offered by Hernando County?



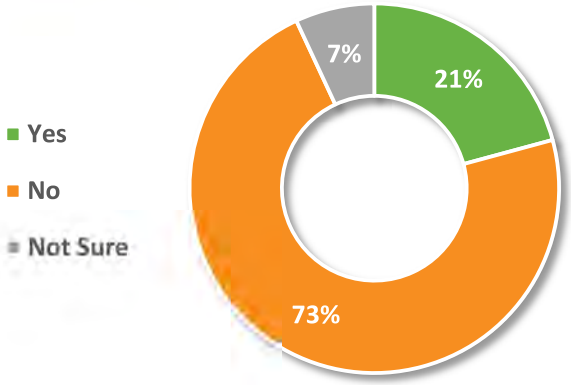

**Overall Quality of Programs, the combination of 'Excellent' and 'Good' ratings only.*

# Statistically Valid Survey Results

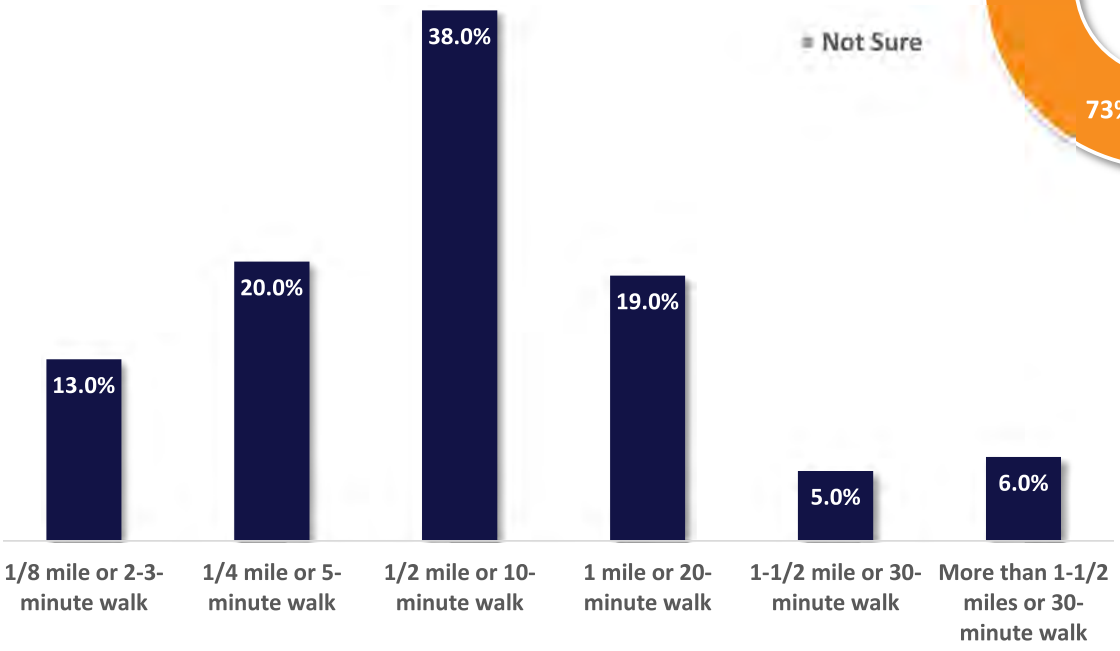
Q: From the following list, please **CHECK ALL** the ways in which you learn about recreation opportunities in Hernando County. (Multiple selections could be made)




Q: Do you feel there are sufficient parks and green space areas within walking distance of your residence?

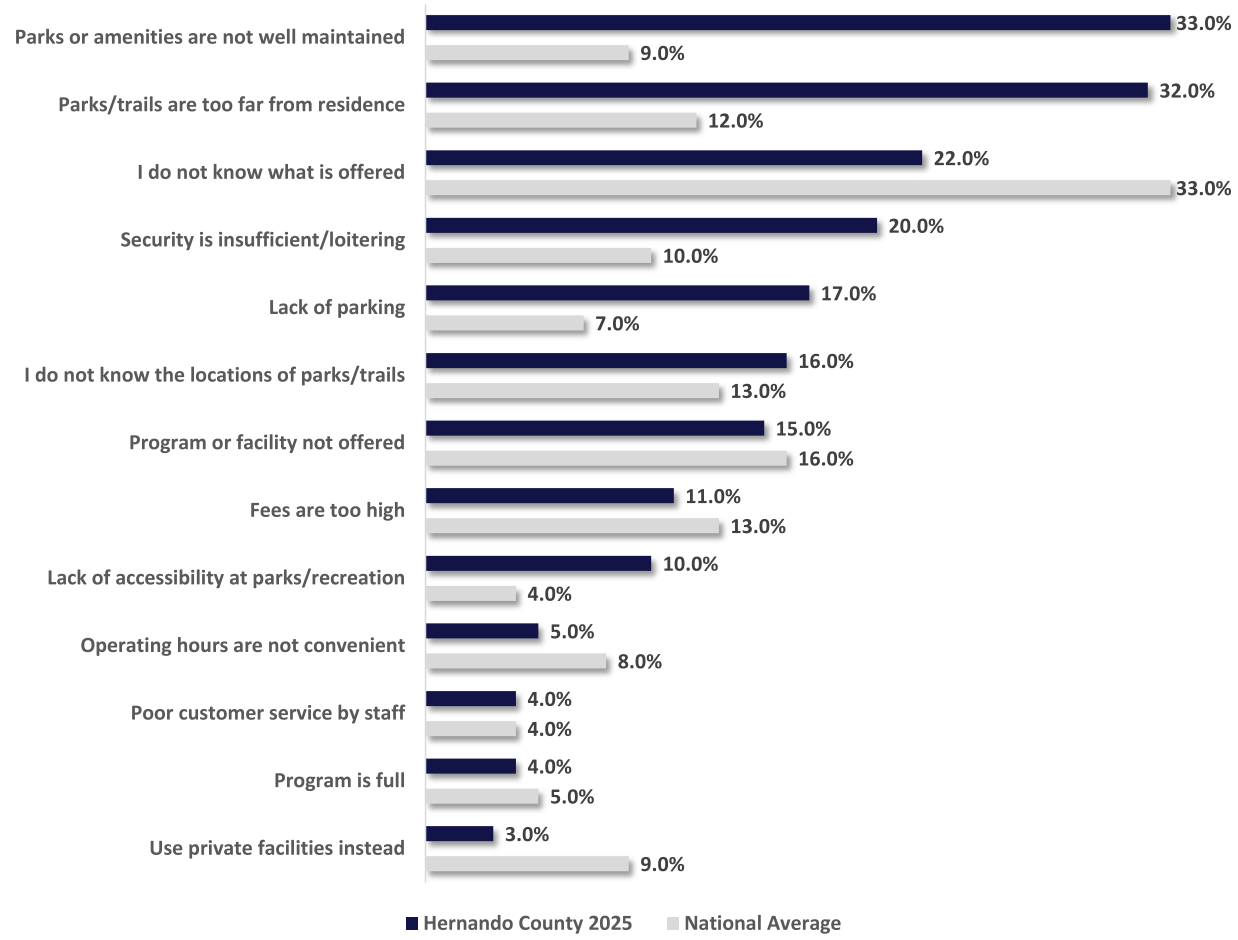



Q: How far are you willing to walk for park or recreation amenities?

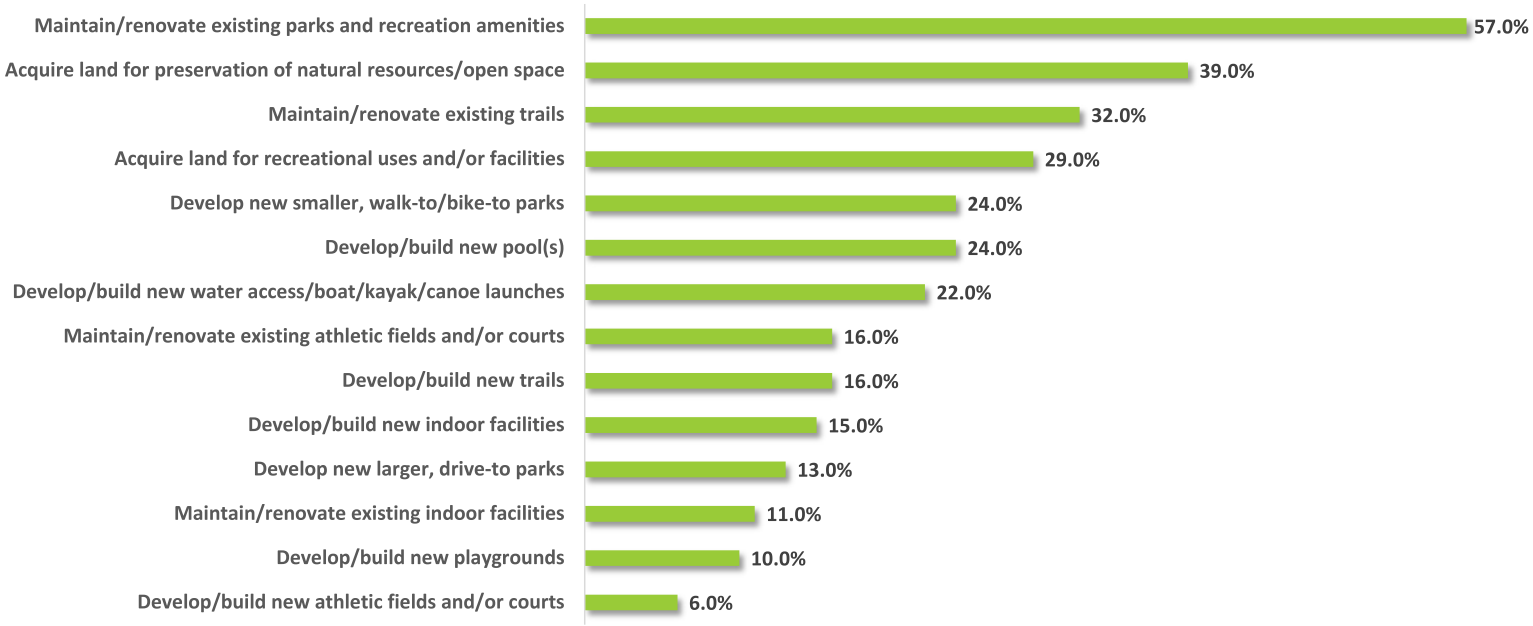


# Statistically Valid Survey Results

## Q: What are the reasons why you do NOT participate in Parks, Trails, Recreation Facilities, or Programs in Hernando County?

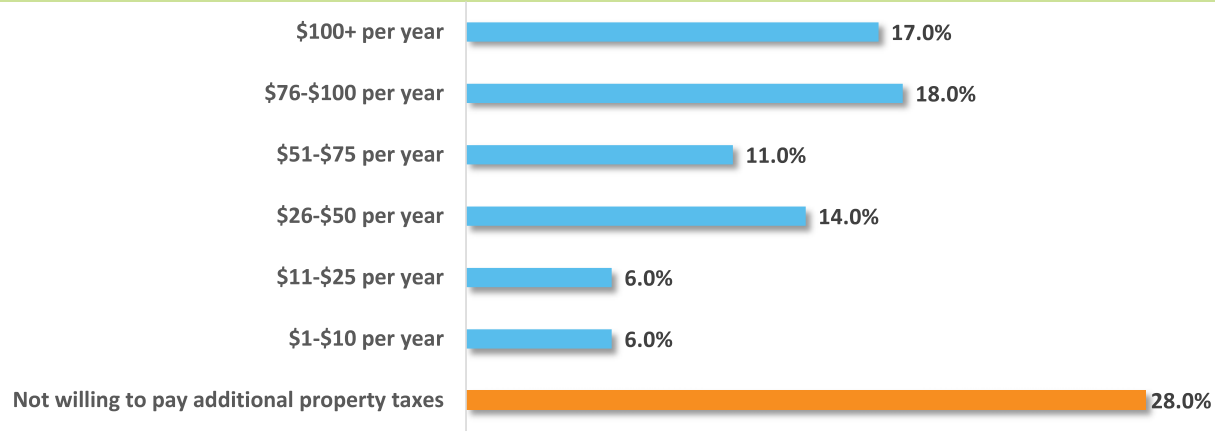



## Q: Which FOUR actions would you be most willing to fund with your tax dollars?

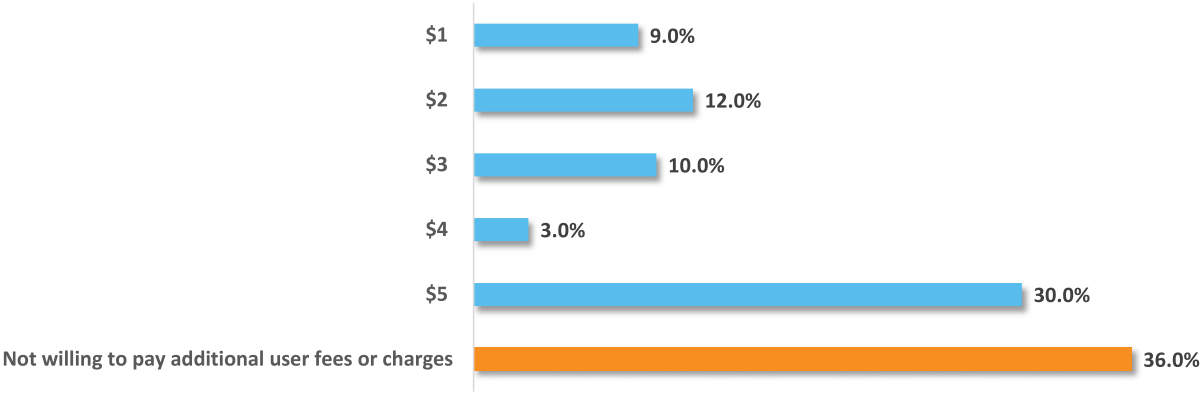


# Statistically Valid Survey Results

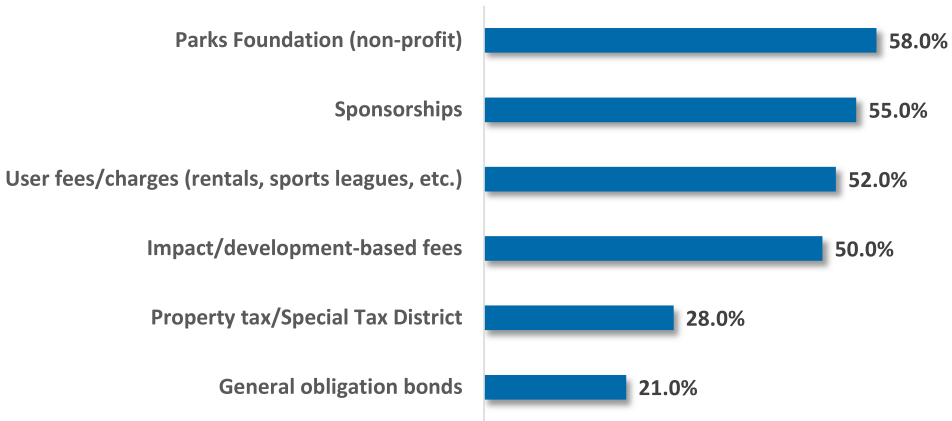
Q: From the following list, please check the additional amount you would be willing to pay to fund the actions that you indicated as most important to your household?




Q: Please check the additional amount in user fees or charges you would be willing to pay for your favorite parks and recreation activity or program.

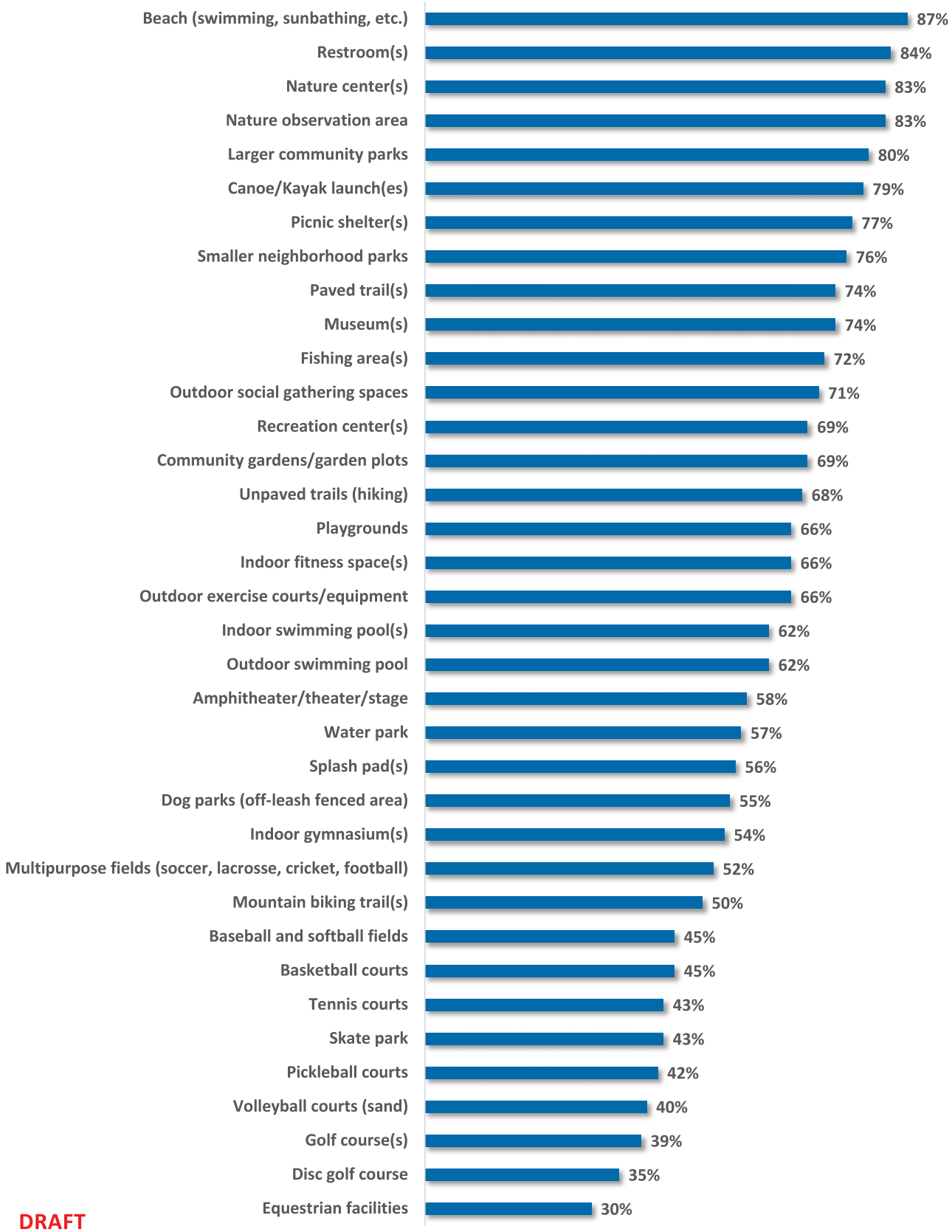



Q: Funding for parks, recreation facilities/programs, and trails may be secured from a variety of sources. Which THREE of the following choices of funding sources do you most prefer?



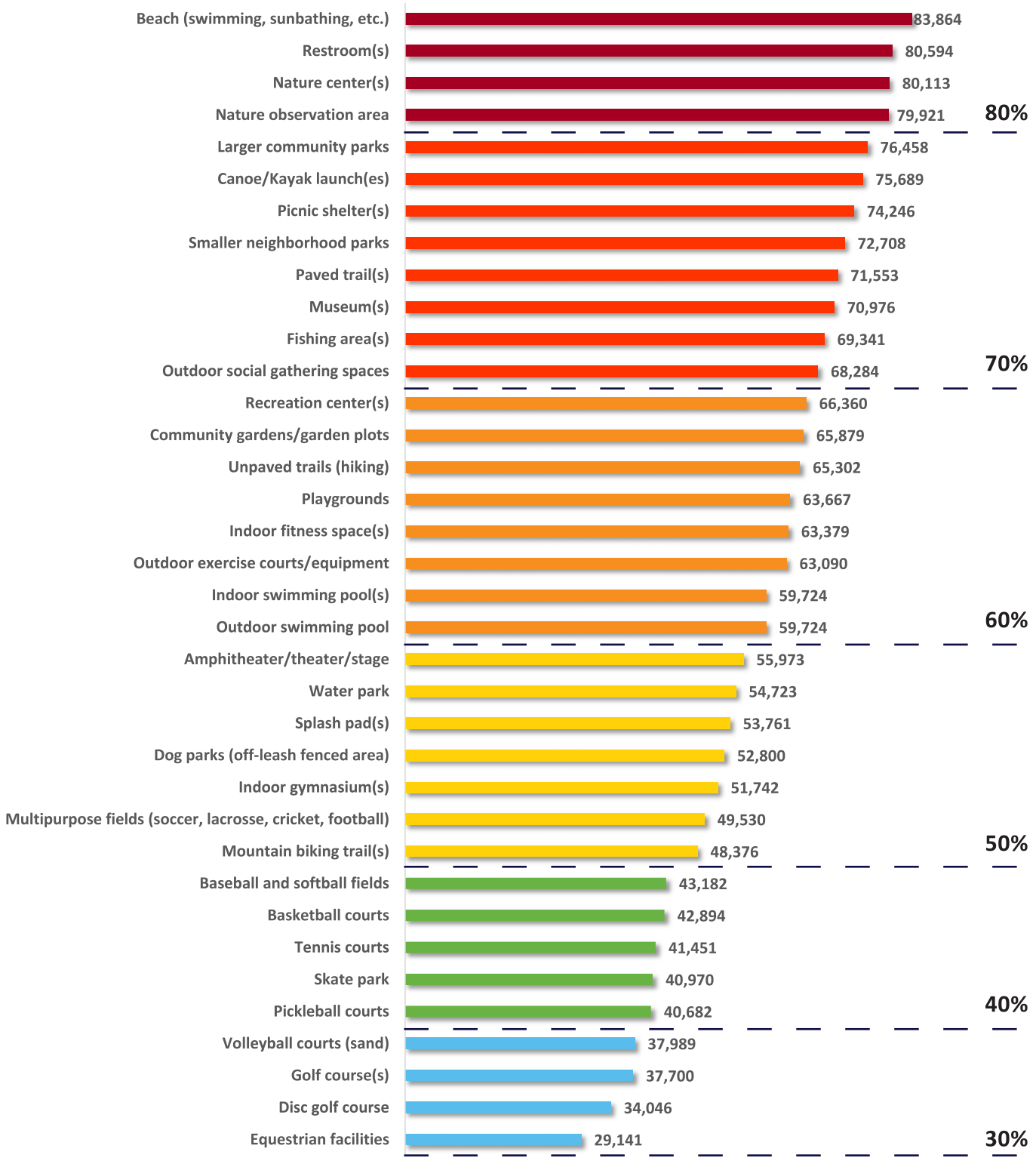
# Statistically Valid Survey Results

## Q: Need for facilities and amenities in Hernando County by percentage of respondents.



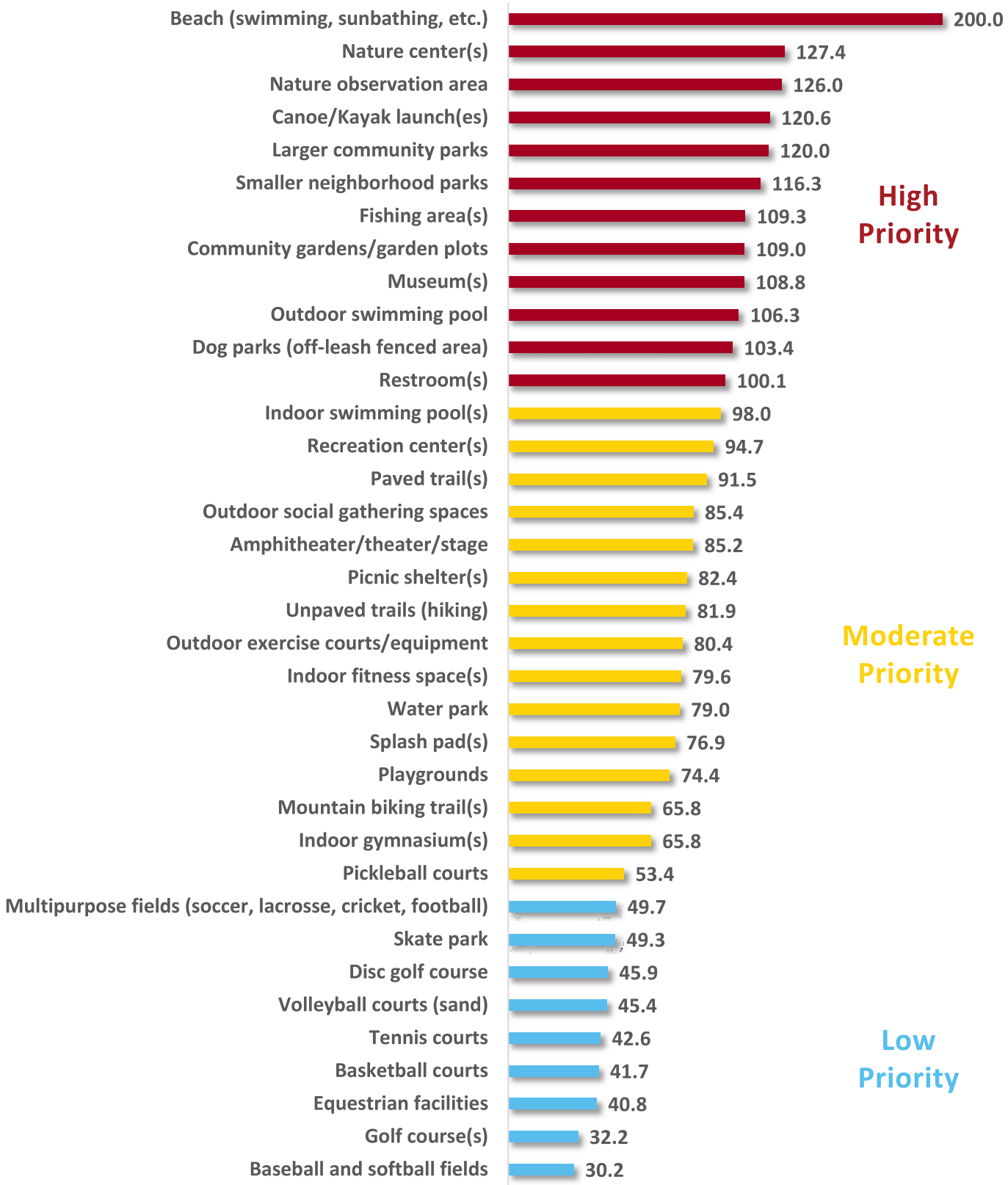
# Statistically Valid Survey Results

Q: Estimated number of households that have needs for the following facilities and amenities in Hernando County that are not met (based on 96,174 households):



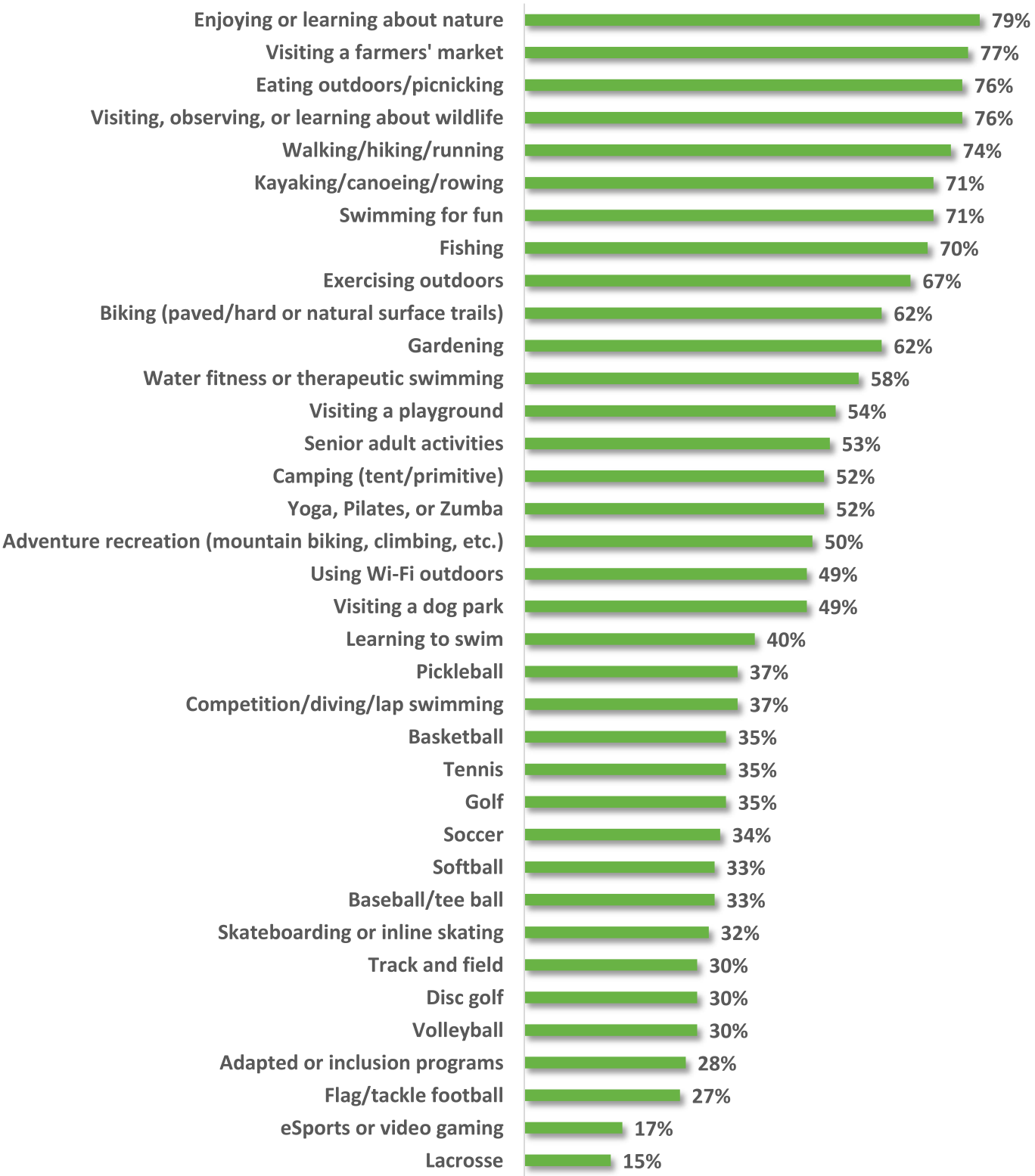
# Statistically Valid Survey Results

Q: Top priorities for investment for facilities and amenities based on priority investment rating:



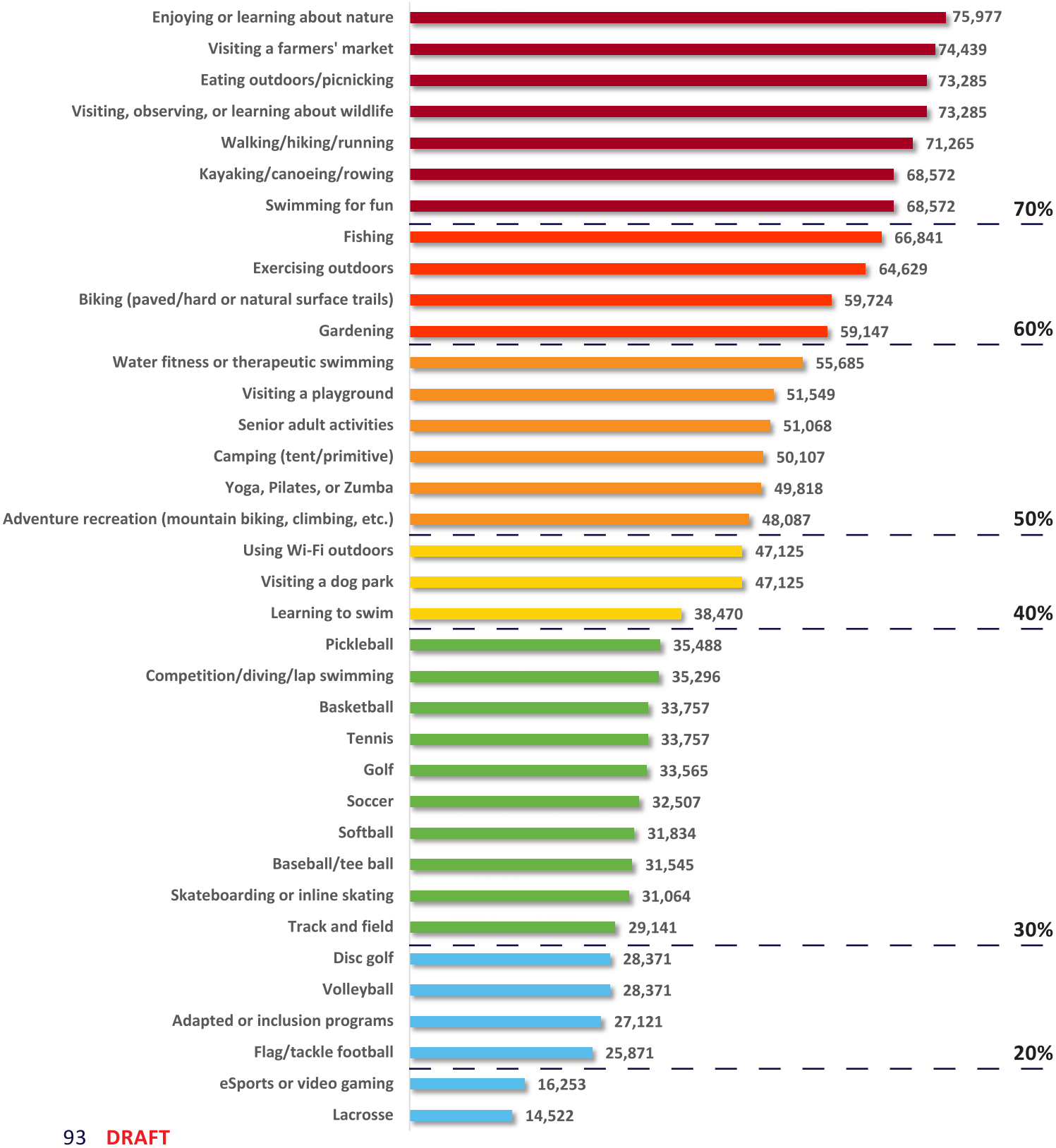
# Statistically Valid Survey Results

Q: Need for activities in Hernando County by percentage of respondents:



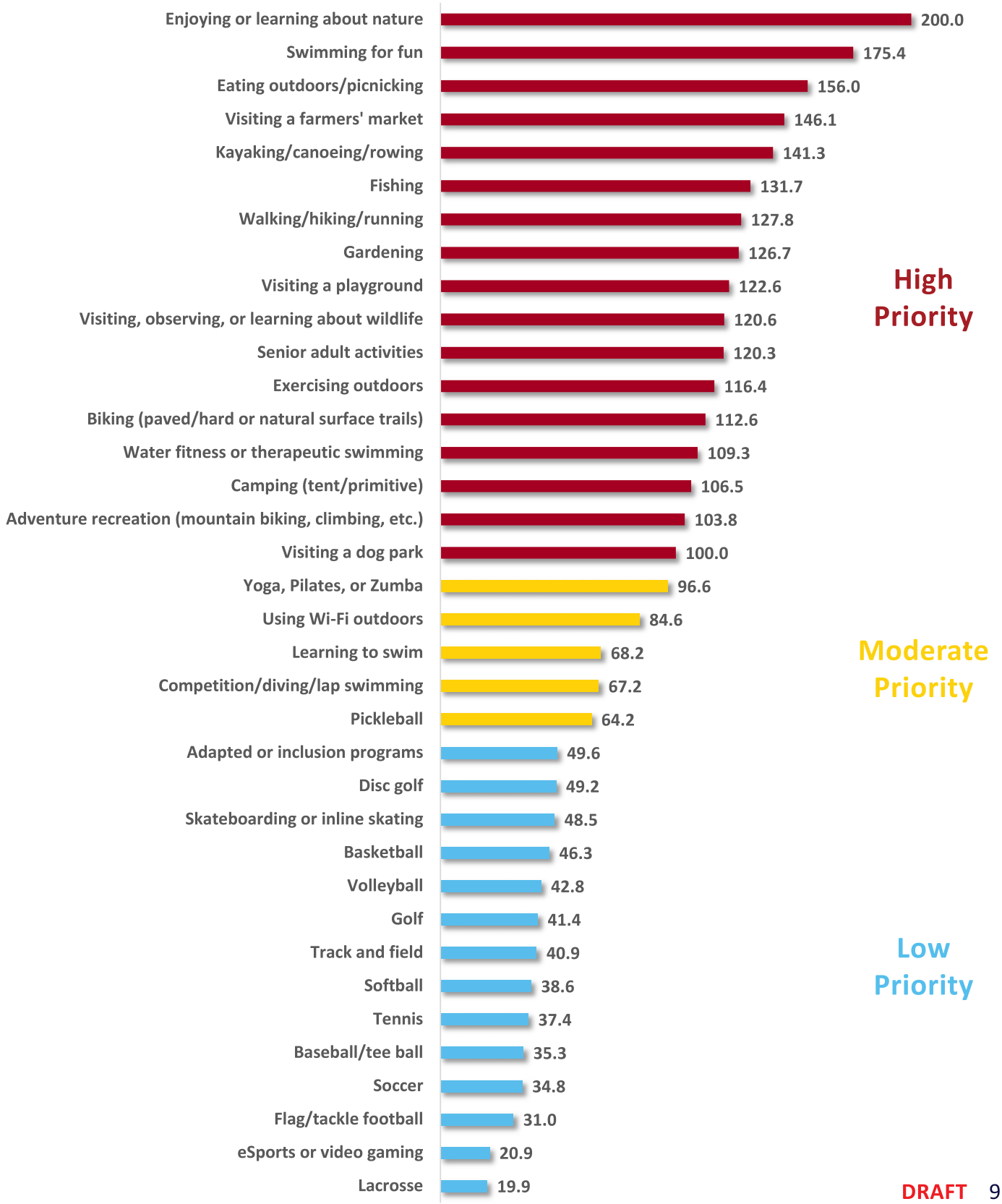
# Statistically Valid Survey Results

Q: Estimated number of households that have needs for the following activities in Hernando County that are not met (based on 96,174 households):



# Statistically Valid Survey Results

## Q: Top Priorities for Investment for Activities Based on Priority Investment Rating:

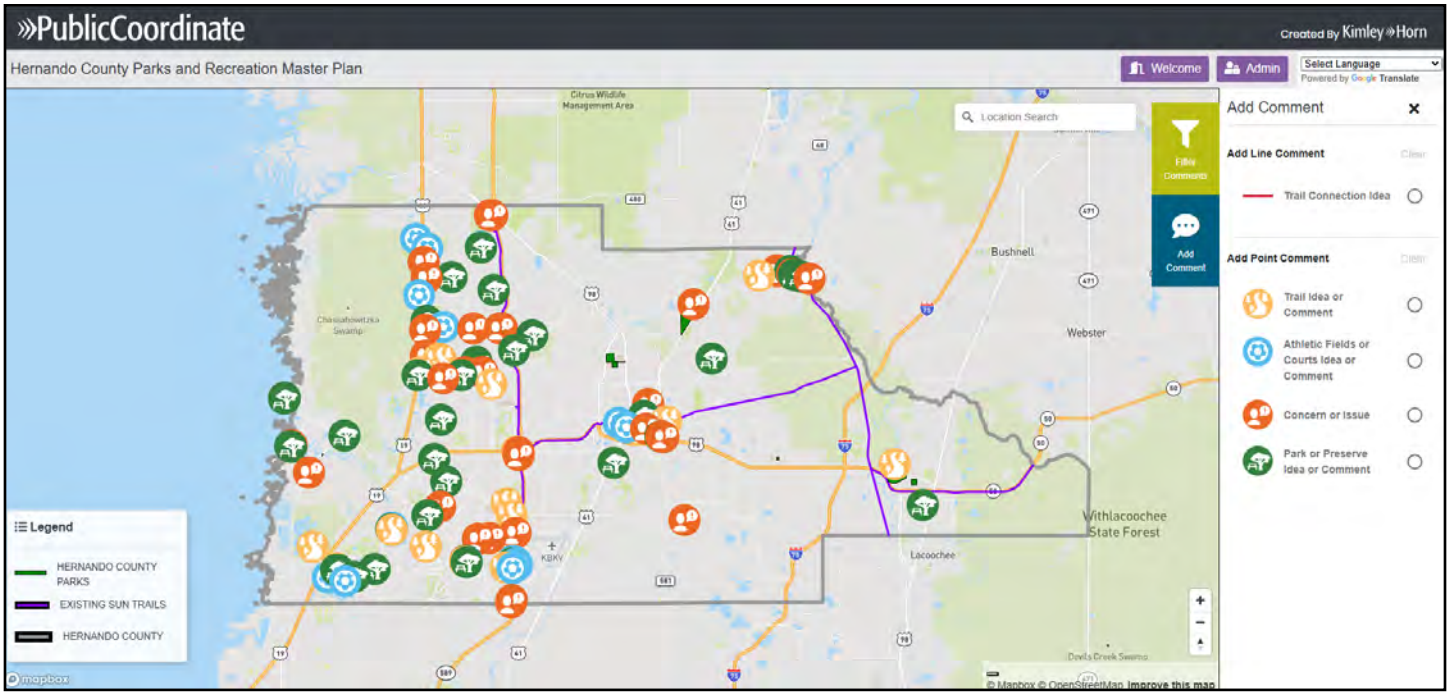


# Public Coordinate

## Overview

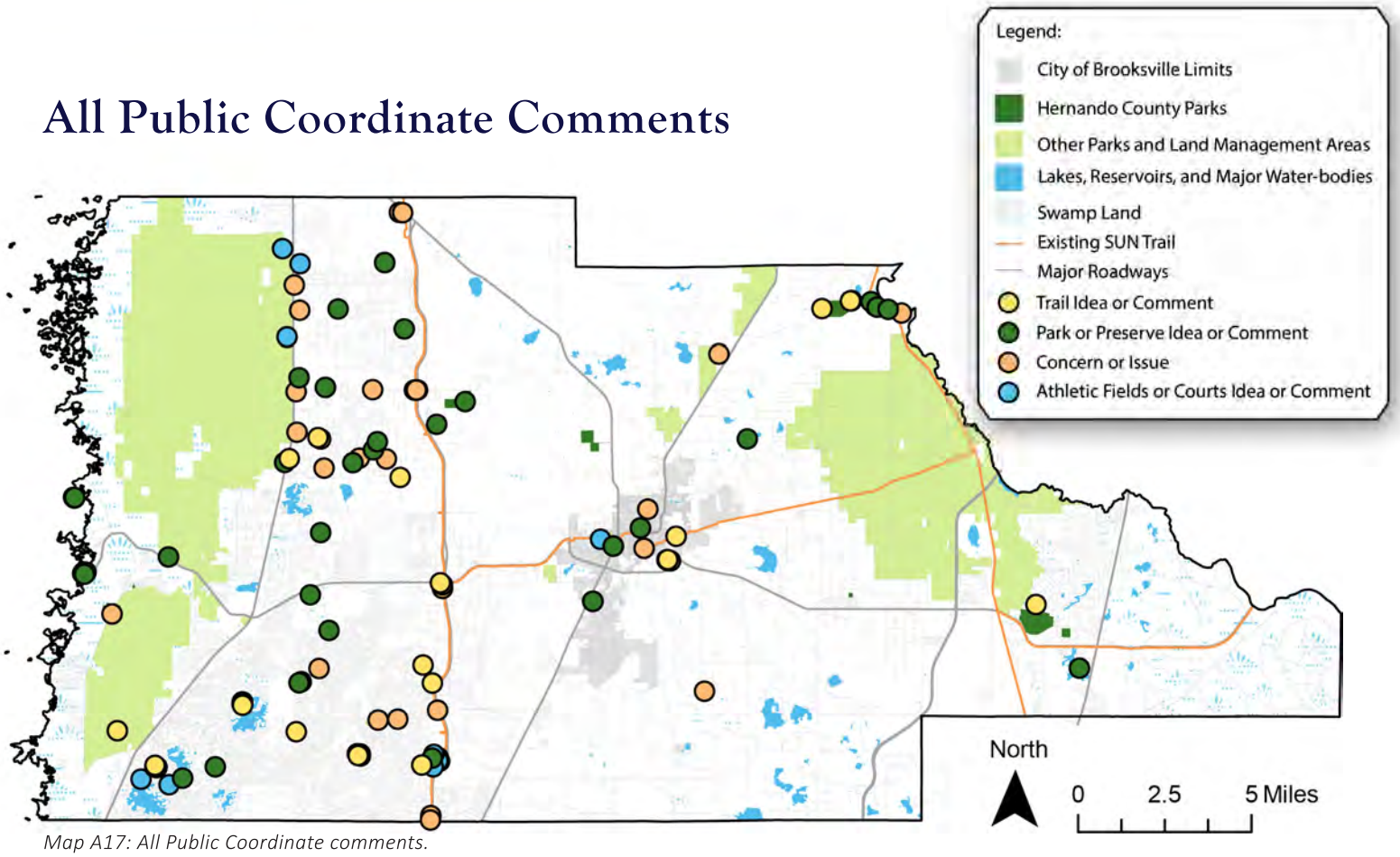
Public Coordinate is Kimley-Horn's interactive public engagement platform that facilitates communication of project information and collection of valuable stakeholder input. Through this platform, we can gain deeper stakeholder insights by creating interactive maps to gather public feedback and collect data through custom and integrated surveys. We can showcase detailed project information by displaying customized content through interactive maps, presenting multiple project alternatives, and creating project web pages to keep communities informed. Public Coordinate allows us to make data-driven decisions by tracking activity and new feedback, viewing and sharing breakdowns of comment categories, and easily exporting map comments and survey responses. It also enables quick sharing of links and QR codes for easy public access, prioritizing accessible outreach in communities.

Public Coordinate hosts an interactive web map that allows stakeholders to provide location-specific comments on land use development projects. Users can select points on the map to leave a comment or click and drag to create a suggested greenway route. All comments must be categorized and, once the website is live, they are cataloged into a comprehensive list for extraction and analysis.

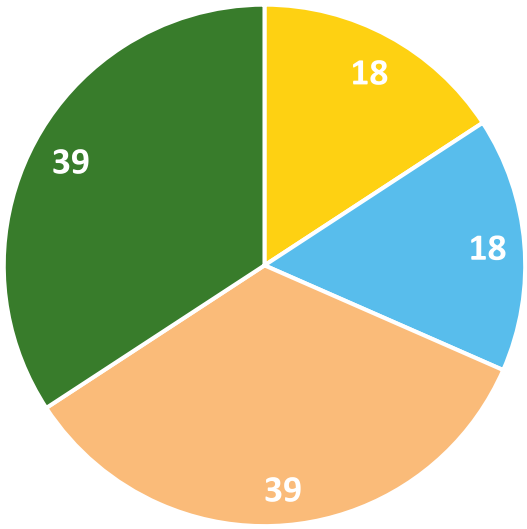



*Map A16: Map of all comments in Public Coordinate software.*

# All Public Coordinate Comments




*Map A17: All Public Coordinate comments.*




- Trail Idea or Comment
- Athletic Fields or Courts Idea or Comment
- Concern or Issue
- Park or Preserve Idea or Comment

*Figure B29: Total comments per category.*

**114 Total Public Coordinate Comments**

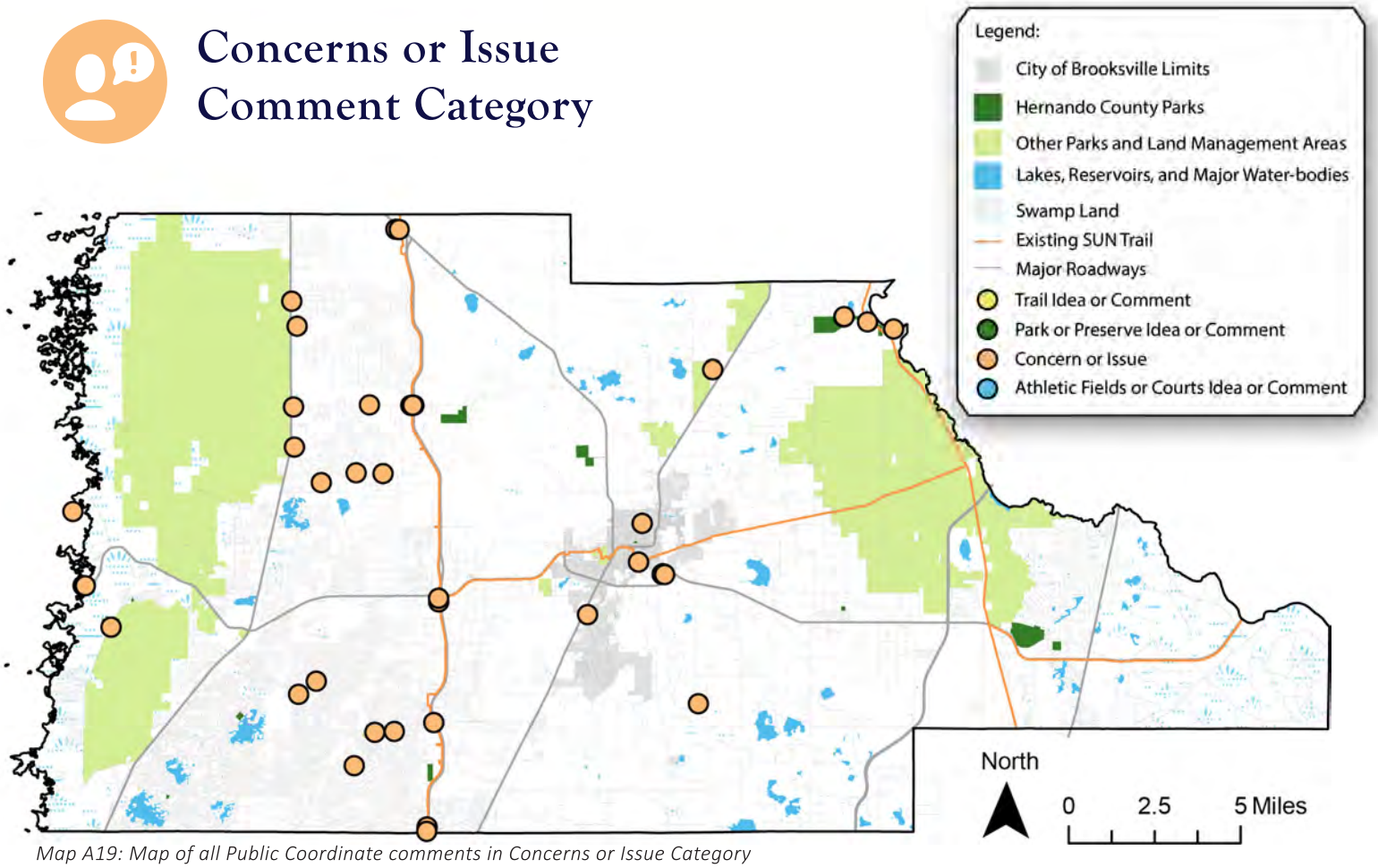
## Key Takeaways:

There is a significant demand for more athletic fields and recreational facilities, such as softball fields, pickleball courts, and swimming pools, which could attract tournaments and local sports events. Residents are concerned about the safety, maintenance, and usability of existing parks, trails, and roads, expressing the need for better infrastructure and amenities.

### Common Places for Map Comments:

- Anderson Snow Park
- Royal Highlands neighborhood
- Hernando County in general
- Pine Island Park
- Weeki Wachee Preserve

# Concerns or Issue Comment Category




*Map A19: Map of all Public Coordinate comments in Concerns or Issue Category*

**35 Comments in the Concern or Issue Category**

## Key Takeaways:

Residents are concerned about the safety and maintenance of existing infrastructure, specifically the need for sidewalks, better traffic control, and security measures.

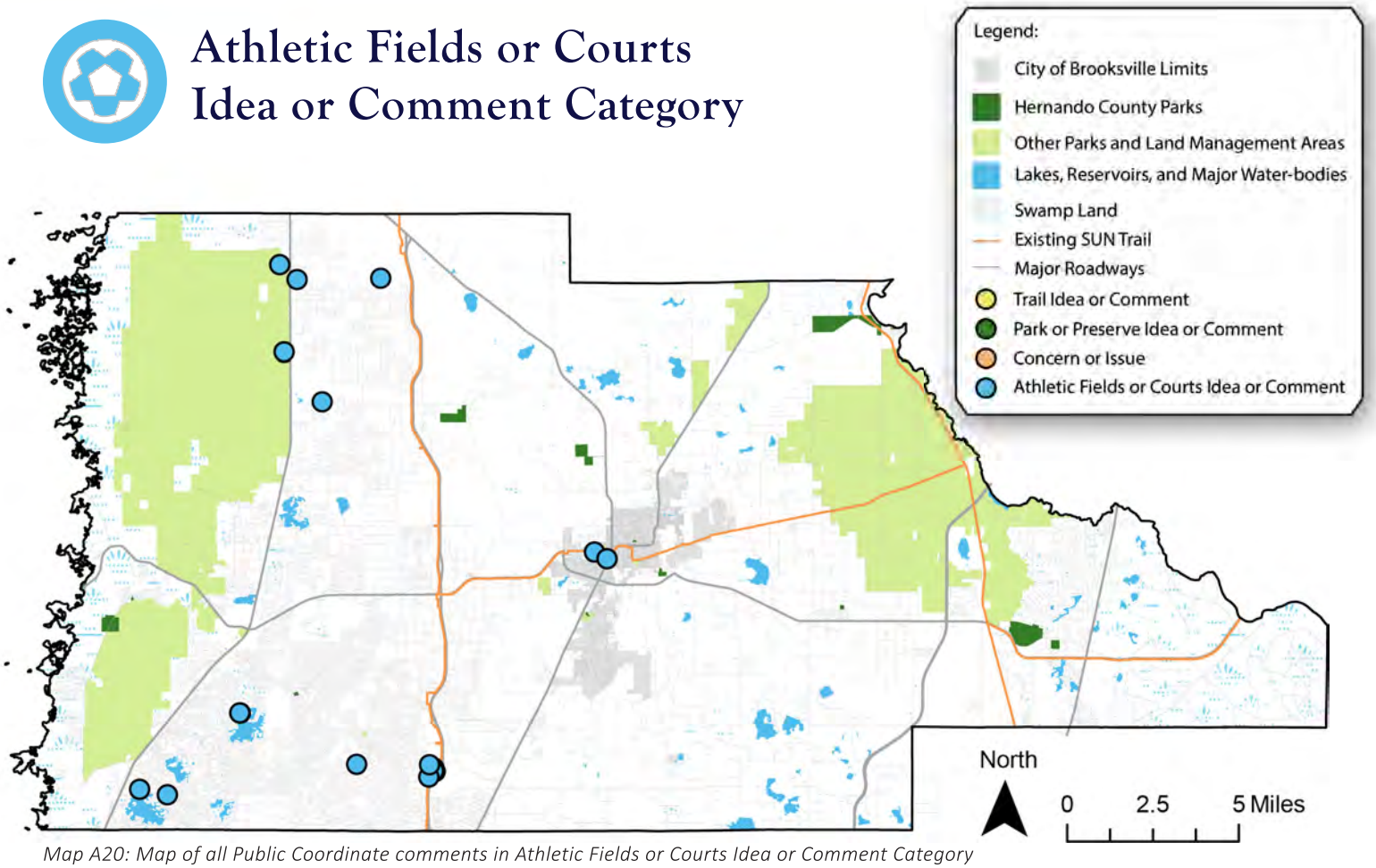
There is a strong sentiment against over development, with residents emphasizing the preservation of natural landscapes and historical sites.

Upgrades to public amenities like restrooms and parking lots are frequently requested to improve usability and cleanliness.

### Examples of public feedback:

- "Bring security here. A lot of drug use happening here and doesn't feel safe. We need police presence."
- "We need sidewalks. The posted speed is 30. Cars frequently speed down this road making it unsafe for children playing as well as those walking to Floyd Elementary located a couple of streets away."
- "Disgusting graffiti all over the overpass. I know this is state land, but can't you do something?"

# Athletic Fields or Courts Idea or Comment Category




*Map A20: Map of all Public Coordinate comments in Athletic Fields or Courts Idea or Comment Category*

**18 Comments in the Athletic Fields or Courts Idea or Comment Category**

## Key Takeaways:

There is a high demand for adding and upgrading athletic facilities such as softball fields, pickleball courts, and swimming pools to accommodate local sports and tournaments.

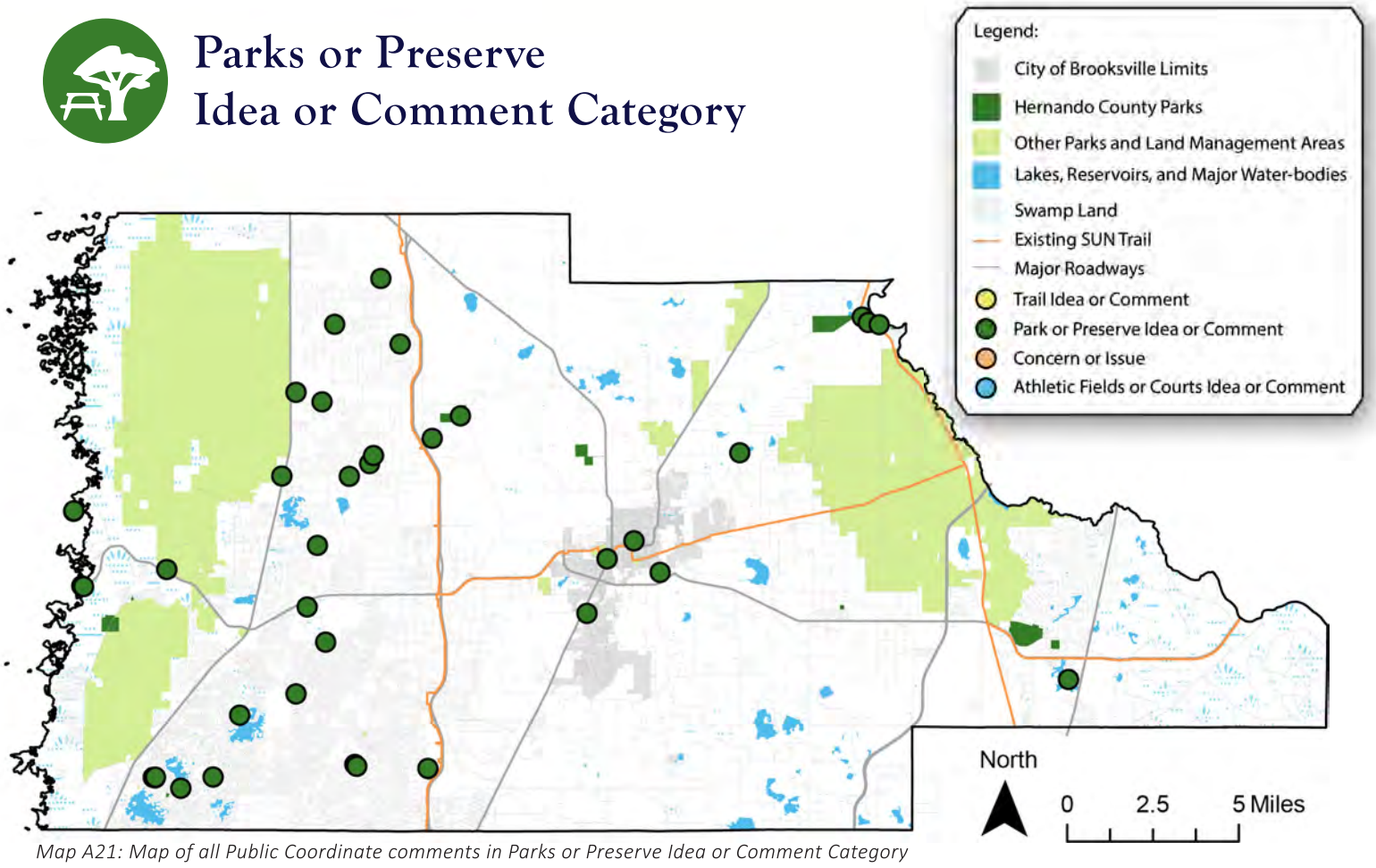
Residents suggest collaborations with schools and other organizations to develop athletic facilities that would benefit both local communities and high school sports programs.

The community sees potential economic and social benefits from developing new athletic fields, including increased tourism and community pride.

### Examples of public feedback:

- "Please add more softball fields so we can host tournaments to increase Hernando county tax revenue."
- "Softball quad plex. Turn the adult softball field into a baseball field. That would allow baseball & softball to host tournaments for rec and travel teams, thus creating more profits."
- "Please add more pickleball courts in the southern part of the county."

# Parks or Preserve Idea or Comment Category




*Map A21: Map of all Public Coordinate comments in Parks or Preserve Idea or Comment Category*

**46 Comments in the Parks or Preserve Idea or Comment Category**

## Key Takeaways:

Residents are calling for the development of parks and recreational areas in underdeveloped parts of the county, particularly in the Royal Highlands and northwest side.

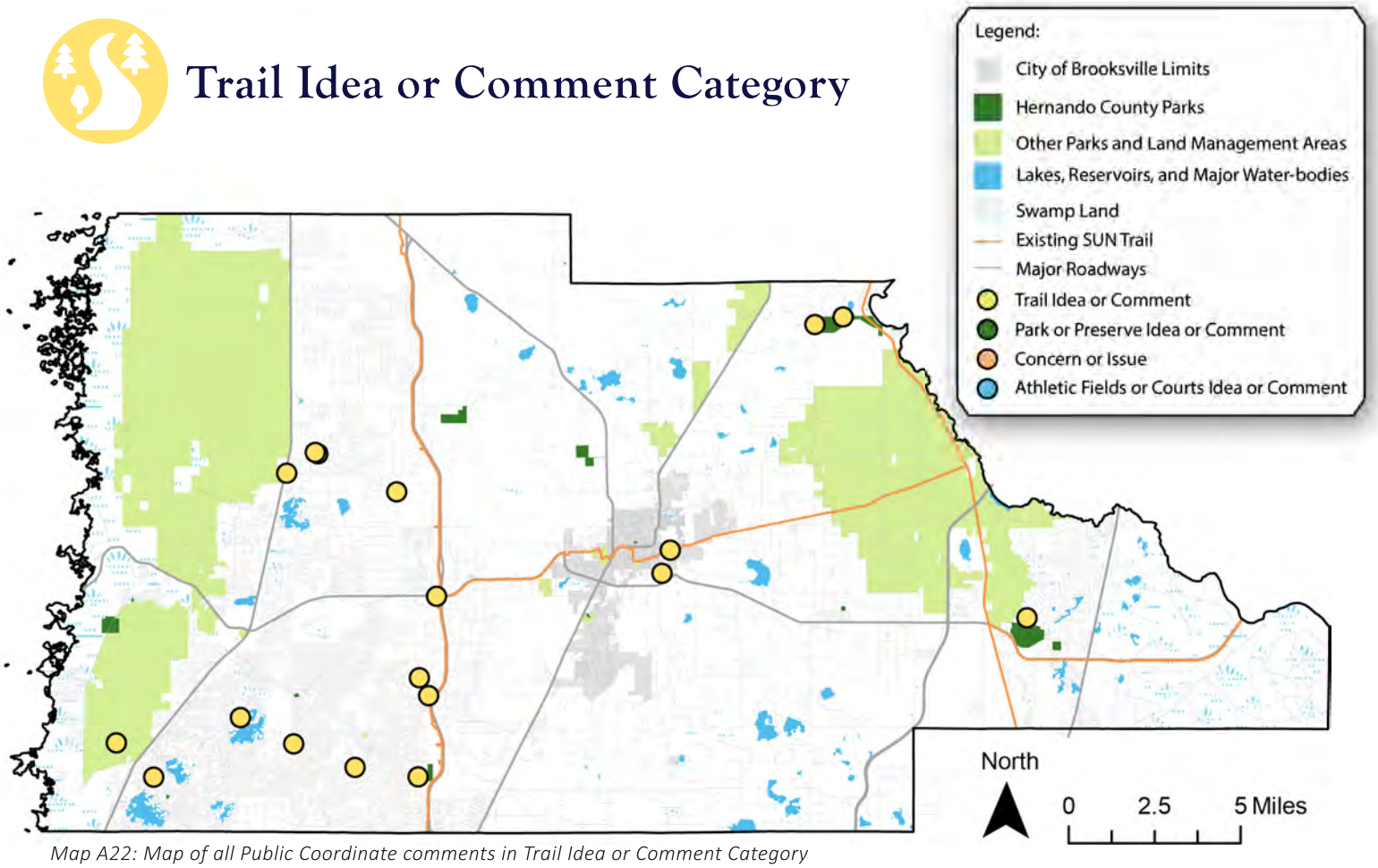
There is a desire for diverse park features such as splash pads, dog parks, walking trails, and leisure facilities that cater to all ages and community groups.

Suggestions include the conversion of underutilized spaces into parks or preserves that can provide ecological, recreational, and social benefits.

### Examples of public feedback:

- "With the Northwest side of the county exploding, we need at least one park in this area. People from the 'Royal Highlands' area have to travel 20 minutes or more to get to a park or rec center/YMCA."
- "Need a park with a playground and trails for Royal Highlands. We have nothing on this side of the county. Especially with all the new developments being built here!"
- "An aquatic center with an indoor and outdoor swimming pool is needed in this county. Water aerobics, swim lessons, swim team, recreation, socialization. This would be a much preferred method to cool off than poorly designed splash pads or natural swimming areas."

# Trail Idea or Comment Category




*Map A22: Map of all Public Coordinate comments in Trail Idea or Comment Category*

**15 Comments in the Trail Idea or Comment Category**

## Key Takeaways:

Residents emphasize the need for well-maintained shaded trails, bike paths, and equestrian trails, making the areas accessible and safer for all users.

Suggestions include adding amenities like benches, gazebos, water stations, and vegetative intersections to enhance the experience and usability of trails.

There is a desire for better publicity and promotion of existing trails to increase their usage and community engagement.

### Examples of public feedback:

- "The only east/west access to Anderson Snow park is on Amero. Walking or biking on Amero is a nightmare. A sidewalk/bike path should be added from Godfrey to the park."
- "Loving the idea of access to the river from the Florida Orange trail. Would love to see more benches for bird watching and nature viewing areas."
- "I love this trail all along SR50 and wish it was better publicized and used. Walking, hiking, biking groups could all make more use of it. I don't think 1% of resident understand this resource."

# Parks and Recreation Master Plan
# Needs Assessment Summary

Through the input and data collected by the various public and staff engagement techniques, a number of community needs and priorities have been identified. Figures B30 and B31 provide a summary of the findings from each assessment technique.

The needs assessment process included observational, qualitative and quantitative techniques for research and feedback. Together they provide opportunities for cross-checking results and aligning feedback to better determine an accurate understand of Hernando County's needs and priorities for parks and recreation.

## Key Takeaways

- **Park Evaluation: The assessment highlighted top-performing parks like Ridge Manor Community Park and Fickett Hammock Preserve, while identifying areas for improvement in parks such as Nobleton Wayside Park and Pioneer Park State Complex. The overall park score averaged 63, indicating moderate performance with opportunities for enhancement.**

- **Demographic Trends: Hernando County is experiencing steady population growth, with a focus on serving a diverse age distribution. The largest demographic is adults aged 20-54, while the youth population remains relatively small. This demographic landscape influences park planning priorities.**

- **Public Engagement: Community involvement was crucial, with feedback emphasizing the need for improved maintenance, increased accessibility, and expanded recreational facilities. Public engagement methods included a mix of in-person events and digital tools to ensure broad participation.**

- **Priorities and Opportunities: Key challenges include funding limitations, aging infrastructure, and overcrowding. Opportunities for growth include developing new recreational facilities, enhancing accessibility, and leveraging partnerships for funding and resource expansion.**

- **Future Directions: The plan outlines strategies for creating vibrant, equitable, and sustainable parks that cater to diverse recreational needs while promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive planning, community engagement, and strategic resource allocation to ensure that parks serve as hubs for community interaction and well-being.**

*Figure B30: Ranking of top 15 park and recreation amenities needs by assessment technique.*

● = Indicates High Needs
● = Indicates Medium Needs
○ = Indicates Low Needs

## Facilities

| Needs Assessment Techniques | Guiding Documents | Demographic Analysis | Park Evaluations | Focus Groups | Public Sessions | SFIA Participation Rates and Trends | Florida SCORP Survey (Usage) | Florida SCORP Survey (Needs) | Online Survey (Most Used) | Online Survey (Importance/Need) | Statistical Survey (Importance) | Statistical Survey (HH Need) | Statistical Survey (Priority Rating) | Level of Service Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paved Trails (walking, hiking, or biking) | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Nature enjoyment or observation areas | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Canoe/kayak launches | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Outdoor swimming pool(s) | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Unpaved trails (hiking) | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Beach (swimming/sun bathing) | ● | | ● | ○ | ○ | | ● | ● | ○ | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Restrooms (Public) | | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Multipurpose fields (soccer, football, etc.) | ● | ○ | ● | ● | | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Pickleball courts | | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Playgrounds (natural, barrier free, etc.) | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Picnic pavilions | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | | ● | | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Dog parks (off leash) | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Smaller Neighborhood Parks | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Baseball/softball fields (adult/youth) | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Fishing dock/pier/shoreline | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ○ | | ● | ● | ● | ● |

*Figure B31: Ranking of top 15 recreation activity or programming needs by assessment technique.*

● = Indicates High Needs
● = Indicates Medium Needs
○ = Indicates Low Needs

## Programs and Activities

| Needs Assessment Techniques | Guiding Documents | Demographic Analysis | Park Evaluations | Focus Groups | Public Sessions | SFIA Participation Rates and Trends | Florida SCORP Survey (Usage) | Florida SCORP Survey (Needs) | Online Survey (Most Participated) | Online Survey (Importance/Need) | Statistical Survey (Most Participated) | Statistical Survey (Importance) | Statistical Survey (HH Need) | Statistical Survey (Priority Rating) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visiting/Observing/Learning Wildlife | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Walking (paved trails or paths) | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● |
| Swimming for fun | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Kayaking/Canoeing | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● |
| Hiking (unpaved trails) | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | |
| Fishing (fresh/saltwater) | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Biking (paved) | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Exercising Outdoors | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Picnicking | ● | ● | ● | ○ | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Pickleball | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |
| Visiting a playground | ● | ● | ● | ○ | | ○ | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ● |
| Water fitness/therapeutic swimming | | ○ | ● | | ○ | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ | ● | ● |
| Camping (tent/primitive) | | ○ | ○ | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ● |
| Softball | ● | ○ | ● | ● | ○ | | ○ | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Senior Adult Activities | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ○ | ● | | | | | ○ | ● | ● | ● |

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

# Vision & Strategic Plan

# Long-Range Vision

## Overview

Long-range visions are crucial for effective planning because they provide a roadmap for development over time. By considering factors such as population growth, changing demographics, physical conditions of facilities and public input, the County can create a blueprint that not only meets the current needs of residents but also anticipates future needs.

Long-range visions can help elected officials make informed decisions about future park development, acquisitions, funding and modifications to policies. Without a long-term plan, park and recreation systems risk becoming irrelevant to residents and negatively impact quality of life. Therefore, having a long-range vision is essential for creating livable, sustainable and thriving communities that can adapt to changing needs and priorities while continuing to meet the needs of their residents well into the future.

## Vision Components

By extrapolating the County's mission/ vision to incorporate the framework distilled from public input and comprehensive analysis, a set of unique components (FIGURE B32) can be identified. Combined, these diverse components will guide the development of parks and recreation facilities across the County. Each component was developed through community input and analysis of the existing physical system. Guiding principles identified for each component describe the community's aspirations for the overall system and physical attributes. Accomplishment of this vision will be dependent upon County staff, existing/future partners and support of residents.

*Veteran's Memorial Park*

## Key Takeaways

- Hernando's vision for Parks and Recreation compliments the County's 2050 Comprehensive Plan and provides a process by which the County will implement their vision.
- The vision consists of five (5) components defined through public engagement and review of characteristics of recreation and park systems.
- Specific goals and objectives are defined to assist in progressing the overall vision.

*Figure B32: Vision Components*

**Five Components**

1. Regional Park
2. Local Serving Parks
    a. District Park
    b. Community Parks
    c. Neighborhood Parks
3. Preserves/Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESLs)
4. Programs
5. Indoor/Outdoor Athletic Facilities

The five (5) components are derived from the County's Comprehensive Plan for Parks and Recreation and input received from both the Staff and Public during the Visioning Workshop and Needs and Priorities Assessment.

## Regional Parks

Guiding principles for Regional Parks include:

1. **Enhance Economic Benefits:** Regional Parks often attract tourists, which generate revenue, create jobs, and help to retain local leisure activity expenditures.

2. **County Provider:** The regional parks are often State and Federal lands. Through County Partnership and land leasing, it allows for integration of County programming and connectivity into the larger regional trail and blueway systems.

3. **Increase Conservation of Biodiversity:** Protection and preservation of unique ecosystems and biodiversity within the County. Creating a safe home for endangered species and maintaining natural habitats.

4. **Improve Resiliency:** Provide a vital role in enhancing resiliency in the County by absorbing environmental shocks, mitigating hazards and protecting local environments.

## Local Serving Parks (District/ Community/Neighborhood Parks)

Guiding principles for Local Serving Parks include:

1. **Promotes Physical Activity for All Ages:** Provide a space for people to engage in both passive and active physical activity, such as walking, running, playing sports. This helps promote physical health and can reduce the risk of obesity and other health problems.

2. **Enhanced Mental Health:** Spending time in parks has been shown to improve mental health and reduce stress levels. Parks provide a peaceful and relaxing environment for people to escape the stresses of daily life.

3. **Foster Social Connections:** Bringing people together and providing a space for community members to socialize and connect. This helps build a sense of community and can lead to increased social cohesion.

4. **Provide Educational Opportunities:** Providing opportunities for people to learn about nature and local environments. This can help foster a sense of environmental stewardship and promote sustainability.

5. **Improved Property Values:** Increase or sustain property values and make neighborhoods more attractive to home buyers. This can lead to economic benefits to the County as a whole.

## Preserves/ Environmentally Sensitive Lands

Guiding principles for Preserves/ Environmentally Sensitive Lands include:

1. **Increase Conservation of Biodiversity:** Protection and preservation of unique ecosystems and biodiversity. Creating a safe home for endangered species and maintaining natural habitats.

2. **Increase Recreational Activities:** Offering opportunities for hiking, kayaking fishing, and other outdoor recreational activities, which promote physical fitness and mental well-being.

3. **Promote Education and Research:** Provided opportunities for scientific research, education and interpretation of natural resources. Enabling residents and visitors to learn about the environment and become better stewards of the land.

4. **Enhance Economic Benefits:** Waterfront and natural parks often attract tourists, which generate revenue, create jobs, and help to retain local leisure activity expenditures.

5. **Improve Resiliency:** Provide a vital role in enhancing resiliency by absorbing environmental shocks, mitigating hazards and protecting local environments.

## Programs

Guiding principles for recreation programming include:

1. **Promote Physical Health:** Promote physical activity, which is essential for maintaining good health through increasing good health through increasing participating activities like sports and fitness classes that can improve overall health and well-being.

2. **Improve Mental Health:** Contribute to a positive impact on mental health. Physical activity has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while social activities can help individuals build confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment.

3. **Promote Community Building:** Brings people together and fosters a sense of community. Through the promotion of group activities, Community members have the opportunity to meet new people, make friends and feel a sense of belonging.

4. **Enhance Economic Benefits:** Creates diverse recreational opportunities for existing and prospective residents to the County.

## Indoor/ Outdoor Athletic Facilities

Guiding principles for indoor/ outdoor athletic facilities include:

1. **Improve Community Health:** County sports complexes can promote physical activity and encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles. They provide a space for people of all ages and abilities to participate in sports and recreational activities.

2. **Increase Socialization:** Sports complexes also provide opportunities for socialization, where people can meet new friends and interact with others of shared interest.

3. **Enhance Economic Benefits:** Athletic facilities can also have positive economic impacts, as they attract visitors and events to the community, generating revenue for local business and the County.

4. **Improve Infrastructure:** Athletic facilities can also help improve the infrastructure of a community by creating new facilities and upgrading existing ones. Complimentary to built infrastructure at existing park facilities.

*Pine Island Park*

# Implementation Strategies

## Overview

The Implementation Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for reinvesting in, expanding, and sustaining Hernando County's parks and recreation system over the next several decades. It translates the Master Plan's vision into a structured series of actions, phased investments, operational and staffing commitments, and funding strategies that reflect the County's unique growth patterns, aging assets, and community priorities.

The plan is designed to be both visionary and practical, balancing immediate needs such as deferred maintenance with long-term system expansion, major facility development, and improved operational capacity. Through a three-phase structure, the Implementation Plan identifies what must be addressed now, what is required to keep pace with growth, and what will ultimately be needed to deliver a resilient, high-performing, and community-centered park system.

*Bayport Park*

## Key Takeaways

- Hernando County requires a total of approximately $201 million in capital investment across three phases—$16.35M in Phase 1, $31.83M in Phase 2, and $152.09M in Phase 3—to stabilize aging assets, meet growth demands, and deliver major new recreation and natural resource facilities.
- Historic annual funding capacity of $12.63 million is inadequate to meet long-term capital and operational needs, and even with a projected 5% annual increase, available revenue over the next decade totals approximately $75.2M, well below what is needed for full implementation.
- Staffing levels must increase significantly from 42.28 FTEs today to an estimated 95–105 FTEs at full build-out to support the expanded inventory of facilities, trails, parks, and indoor recreation spaces included in the Implementation Plan.
- Long-term success will require new funding tools beyond current resources, including GO bonds, state and federal coastal resilience grants, sponsorships, partnerships, and updated impact fees, particularly to support Phase 3's large-scale recreation, waterfront, and environmental projects.

# Phased Approach

Hernando County's park system is at a pivotal moment. With rapid residential growth, aging infrastructure, aging coastal assets vulnerable to storms, and increasing demand for play, athletic, and natural resource amenities, the County must invest strategically to maintain safety, improve service levels, and expand capacity.

The Implementation Plan organizes capital and operational needs into a three-phase structure:

**Phase 1 – Deferred Maintenance & Repair (1–5 Years)**
Stabilizes the system, reduces risk, and addresses aging and undersized infrastructure in neighborhood and community parks.

**Phase 2 – Addressing Growth (6–10 Years)**
Adds capacity in high-demand areas such as fields, courts, pavilions, trails, and expands the operational organization to a three-crew countywide model.

**Phase 3 – Meeting Community Needs (10+ Years)**
Delivers major, long-term facilities such as nature centers, waterfront complexes, regional athletic and aquatic facilities, and transformative natural resource improvements.

These phases reflect prioritized needs, funding feasibility, equity, public demand, and long-term sustainability.

*Anderson Snow Splash Park*

# Budget Analysis

This section provides an overview of Hernando County's historic and current financial capacity to support parks and recreation services. It includes an analysis of baseline FY2026 operating costs, revenue from park services, historic funding sources such as impact fees and CIP allocations, and a five-year projection using a 5% annual growth rate. Key findings highlight the County's reliance on general fund support, the gap between revenue growth and operational needs, and the importance of establishing sustainable long-term funding tools. **The County's historic funding is sufficient to maintain, but not grow, the system.**

- Annual Park Impact Fees: $1,000,000
- General Fund O&M Support: $7.6M
- CIP Funding (5-Year Total): $20.159M ($4.03M/year)
- Combined historic annual resources = $12.63M, which is significantly below what is required to implement the full $200.26M capital program.

**FY2026 Adopted Operating Budget**
- Personnel Services: $3,127,256
- Operating Expenses: $3,529,469
- Capital Outlay: $949,880
- Revenue (services & charges): +$850,218

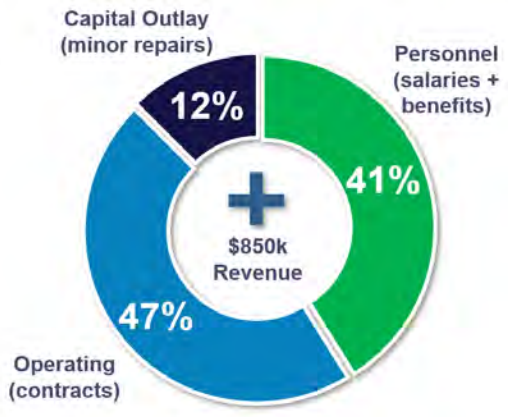



*Figure B33: Hernando County FY2026 adopted operating budget breakdown by percentage*

**Total Expenses:** $7,606,605/yr
**Net Capital Funding** $5,979,880/yr

**5-Year Capital Funding Projection** (+5% Annually)
- FY2027: $5.98M
- FY2028: $6.28M
- FY2029: $6.59M
- FY2030: $6.92M
- FY2031: $7.27M

This section sets the foundation for understanding the County's ability to support future service levels, workforce expansion, and long-term capital renewal. Even with 5% annual growth, available capital funding totals a potential $75.2 million over the next 10 years, requiring additional funding tools in order to fully implement this plan.

**Phase Structure**
**Phase 1 – Deferred Maintenance & Repair (1–5 Years)**
Focus: Asset stabilization, risk mitigation, ADA/safety, restroom and playground replacements, resurfacing, coastal reinforcement.

**Phase 2 – Addressing Growth (6–10 Years)**
Focus: Adding fields, courts, pavilions, shelters, playgrounds, and completing system wide trail enhancements; implementing a three-crew regional maintenance model.

**Phase 3 – Meeting Community Needs (10+ Years)**
Focus: Major new facilities, indoor/outdoor aquatics, regional centers, waterfront complexes, environmental stewardship projects, and signature natural resource investments.

| Total Capital Needs | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase** | **Capital Need** | **Annual O&M Costs** | **Capital Renewal Costs (30-40 Years)** |
| Phase 1 | $16,347,250 | $582,892/yr | $9,808,350 |
| Phase 2 | $31,978,750 | $1,115,212/yr | $19,097,250 |
| Phase 3 | $152,085,000 | $4,667,550/yr | $91,251,000 |
| Total | $201,411,000 | $6,365,654/yr | $120,156,600 |

*Figure B34: Hernando County Total Capital Needs*

**Budget Implications by Phase**
Budget implications reflect costs of capital, O&M growth, staffing, and lifecycle reinvestment.

**Phase 1:** Achievable within historic + projected 5% funding levels with strategic grant pursuit.

**Phase 2:** Requires moderate funding growth, staffing expansion, and diversified investment tools.

**Phase 3:** Requires long-term financing (bonds, resilience funding, partnerships), structured around the County's most ambitious facility goals.

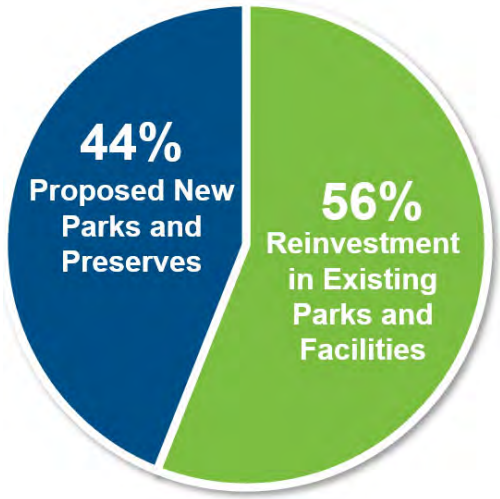



*Figure B35: Percentage of Capital Cost as New Parks/ Preserves vs. Reinvestment in Existing Parks/Preserves*

# Cost Estimate

This section details the full capital investment needed to modernize, expand, and sustain the Hernando County park system. It includes cost estimates for each implementation phase based on the County's needs assessment and project list, projected increases in annual operations and maintenance costs, and long-term Capital Renewal Value (CRV) requirements. Key findings emphasize the scale of investment required to serve a rapidly growing population and the importance of creating sustainable funding tools to support long-term infrastructure.

*Figure B36: Capital Cost by Type*

# Staffing Projections

This section outlines the current staffing levels of the Parks and Recreation Department and projects additional personnel needed to support the capital build out, operations, maintenance, and new facilities associated with each implementation phase. Key findings show that the existing 42.28 FTE workforce is insufficient for the current system and that full build out will require doubling staffing levels, especially in maintenance and facility operations.

**Existing Staffing – 42.28 FTE**
**Projected Staffing Needs**

**Phase 1 – Deferred Maintenance & Repair**
- +6 to 8 FTE (Technicians, specialists, crew leader)

**Phase 1 Total: 48–50 FTE**

**Phase 2 – Addressing Growth:** Implementation of the Three-Crew Regional Maintenance Model
- +3 Crew Leaders
- +12 Technicians
- +3 Specialists
- +3 Equipment Operators
- +5 Recreation/Seasonal staff

**Phase 2 Total: 70–74 FTE**

**Phase 3 – Meeting Community Needs:** For new indoor facilities, aquatics, preserves, waterfronts:
- +1 Facility Manager
- +3 Recreation Coordinators
- +4–6 Facility Attendants
- +2 Custodial
- +1 Aquatics Supervisor
- +6–8 Lifeguards
- +1 Aquatics Maintenance Specialist
- +4 Natural Lands FTEs
- +8–12 Maintenance FTEs

**Phase 3 Total: 95–105 FTE**

# Project Prioritization and Implementation

This section outlines how projects will be sequenced, prioritized, and funded throughout the three phases of system reinvestment. It presents a summary of capital needs, O&M increases, staffing projections, and funding tools that Hernando County can use to successfully execute the master plan. Key findings reveal that while Phase 1 is achievable within current resources, Phases 2 and 3 require expanded funding strategies, grant competitiveness, and long-term financing options such as GO bonds and resilience funding.

**Project Prioritization**
Projects across all phases are prioritized based on:

1. Life safety & asset condition
2. Deferred maintenance urgency
3. Equity and underserved areas
4. Demand & public need
5. Operational capacity
6. Environmental vulnerability (coastal/hydrology)
7. Revenue or cost-recovery potential

| Criteria | Score Range |
|---|---|
| Improves Access or Connectivity Goals | 0-5 |
| Improves or Enhances Open Space Goals | 0-3 |
| Supports Identified Public Need/Demand | 0-5 |
| Leverages Alternative Funding Sources/ Matches | 0-5 |
| Capital/Operations Partnership Potential | 0-5 |
| Revenue Generation Potential | 0-4 |
| Deferred Maintenance or Lifecycle Need | 0-5 |
| Enhances Critical Infrastructure | 0-3 |
| Promotes Tourism | 0-4 |
| **Total Potential Score** | **39** |

*Figure B37: Project Prioritization Rankings*

| Implementation Phases and Staffing | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase** | **Capital Need** | **Added O&M Costs** | **Added FTE** | **Staffing Total** |
| Phase 1 | $16.35M | $582,892 | +6-8 | 48-50 |
| Phase 2 | $31.98M | $1.12M | +21 | 70-74 |
| Phase 3 | $152.09M | $4.67M | +25-32 | 95-105 |
| Total | $200.41M | $6.36M | +52-61 | 95-105 |

*Figure B38: Hernando County Implementation Phases and Staffing*

**Funding Strategy Expansion**

**General Obligation (GO) Bonds:** GO bonds are the most effective mechanism to fund the Phase 3 major build out, including:

- Recreation centers
- Aquatic complexes
- Waterfront resiliency
- Park system expansions

They provide generational investments at low interest rates, distributed over 20–30 years.

**State & Federal Resilience Funding:** Because Hernando has significant coastal and riverfront assets, it is highly competitive for:

- FEMA BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities)
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants
- DEP Resilient Florida Grants
- NOAA Habitat & Coastal Resilience Funding
- Army Corps Environmental Infrastructure Programs

These can fund:

- Elevated restrooms
- Boardwalks
- Shoreline stabilization
- Drainage systems
- Storm-resilient structures

**Naming Rights & Sponsorships:** Ideal for:

- Sports complexes
- Aquatic centers
- Pavilions
- Trails and boardwalks

This provides dedicated revenue for:

- O&M offsets
- Capital improvements
- Programming support

**Donor and Philanthropic Contributions:** Hernando's environmental assets (springs, coastal preserves, blueways) are highly aligned with:

- Conservation donors
- Outdoor recreation brands
- Local foundations
- Endowment models

**Impact Fees:** Impact fees should be reviewed and calibrated to:

- Account for modern construction costs
- Reflect population growth trends
- Support the Phase 2 and Phase 3 capital needs

**Grants & Competitiveness:** This master plan significantly improves the county's competitiveness for state and federal parks, recreation, conservation, and resilience grants.

# Grant Stacking

Utilizing multiple funding sources has become the most effective way of maximizing the amount of funding a community can obtain. Grant stacking allows a project to draw funding from several sources from the federal, state and local levels to support one project. Careful selection of grants can result in one grant providing the matching funds requirement for another grant and reciprocal as well. This process can address acquisition and development in phases to best meet a project's design intent and schedule.

Figure B39 lists several public grant programs that are considered a strong fit for the proposed capital improvements identified in this master plan. Additionally, as noted in the previous section, having an adopted parks and recreation master plan typically increases results for competitively receiving grants as it highlights the County's ability to plan for future needs and understand citizen's needs.

| Grant Funding Program | Potential Grant Amount | Cost Share/ Match Requirement | Park Elements |
|---|---|---|---|
| American Academy of Dermatology Shade Structure Grant | $8,000 | 0% | Shade Structures |
| Coastal Resiliency Implementation Grant (FDEP) | $500,000 | 0% | Living Shoreline, Seawall, Wetlands, Beach an Habitat Improvements |
| Florida Boating Improvement Program (FBIP) (FWC) | TBD | 0% | Boating Ramps, Piers/Docks, Boating Education, Public Launching Facilities |
| Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Parks and Open Space | TBD | 25% | Land Acquisition |
| Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) (FDEP) | $200,000 | 50% | Land Acquisition, Ballfields, Courts, Fishing Facilities, Trails, Playground, Restroom, Shade Structures, Landscaping |
| Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FDEM) | TBD | 25% | Elevation of Flood Prone Structures, stormwater management improvements |
| Land & Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF) | $1,500,000 | 50% | Land Acquisition, Ballfields, Courts, Fishing Facilities, Trails, Playground, Restroom, Shade Structures, Landscaping |
| MLB-MLBPA Youth Development Foundation | TBD | 50% | Field Renovations, Field Lighting, Construction |
| Recreational Trails Program (RFP) | TBD | 20 - 50% | Nonmotorized trail projects, motorized trails projects, mixed-use trails projects, trailside amenities, or trailheads |
| Southwest Florida Water Management District Cooperative Water Program (SWFWMD) | TBD | 50% | Spring Restoration Grant Program, Irrigation |
| Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) through FDOT | $1,000,000 | 0% | Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails/ Greenways |
| Waste management Local Charitable Contribution | TBD | TBD | Environmental Education, Community-Specific Projects |

*Figure B39: Grant Opportunities*

# Complimentary Providers and Partnerships

Exploring potential complimentary providers in Hernando County will help ensure that neighbors have access to recreation and program opportunities. This is in alignment with alternative funding sources identified in the 2040 Hernando Parks and Recreation Plan. By growing existing and establishing new relationships for potential partnerships can expand recreation access across the County. Organizations that provide facilities and activities include:

- **Youth Sports Organizations:** Outdoor youth sports are provided by various groups operating mainly out of Anderson Snow, Delta Woods and Ernie Wever Parks. Hernando County will continue to rely on these organizations and should designate staff to regularly coordinate with these organizations.

- **Other Government Providers:** With the large amount of State land, there needs to be strong efforts to partner with other governmental agencies at the state level and local level to develop programs and services. Program areas that could be provided by other organizations through a partnership include special needs, special events, and outdoor recreation activities.

- **Non-Profit Providers:** Coordinating with a variety of non-profit providers to deliver recreation services needs to continue to be pursued. Organizations such as the Rotary Club, United Way, Boys & Girls Club, and YMCA, etc. should be encouraged to continue to develop facilities and provide programs in Hernando. These types of organizations are well positioned to provide a variety of programs and funding support in different areas.

- **Private Recreation Providers:** There are several private recreation, sports, and fitness providers located in the Hernando market (health clubs, dance, martial art studios, and arts studios). With the County to continue to grow in population and develop there is a lot of opportunities for increased programming. These entities should be counted on to provide more specialized activities that are difficult for the public sector to conduct.

- **Faith Based Organizations:** With a significant number of churches and other faith-based institutions in the community, they often provide some recreation services for their congregation and community. These organizations should be seen as possible providers of some basic community-based recreation services and facilities as well.

- **Community Organizations:** Developing working relationships with community organizations and service clubs can provide support for program or volunteer park clean up groups. Additionally, connectivity groups such as the Florida Trail Association are already active in Hernando and can be partnered with to provide greenway maintenance and programming.

- **Business and Corporate Community:** It is important to approach the corporate community with a variety of sponsorship opportunities to enhance the revenue prospects of the Department's programs and facilities. With completion of an updated master plan, the Department's ability to leverage identified need and community vision for parks and recreation should continue to have an impact on receiving financial support from the business community.

# Implementation Plan Summary

Hernando County's parks and recreation system faces a dual challenge of aging infrastructure and rapid population growth, requiring a coordinated approach to capital investment, operational funding, and staffing. The three-phase Implementation Plan outlines $200 million in capital improvements, significant increases in annual operations and maintenance needs, and a long-term staffing expansion from 42 FTEs to as many as 105 FTEs at full build out.

While Phase 1 needs can be supported through existing and projected revenue sources, sustaining Phases 2 and 3 will require expanded funding capacity, external grant support, and long-term financing tools. Together, these findings underscore the importance of establishing predictable funding mechanisms, such as GO bonds, resilience grants, sponsorships, and partnerships—to ensure safe, equitable, and high-quality recreation services countywide.

*Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Senior Park New Playground*

# Overview for Park Concepts

Building on the community's priorities, existing conditions, and future needs, this plan outlines how the County can reinvest in aging facilities, expand capacity to meet rapid growth, and develop high-impact amenities that enhance quality of life for all residents. To help visualize how countywide recommendations are applied on the ground, the Implementation Plan includes concept designs for four representative park sites. These examples demonstrate how improvements such as upgraded playgrounds, enhanced sports amenities, expanded trails, resilient coastal infrastructure, and modern support facilities could be implemented in real-world conditions. Together, these concepts illustrate the practical application of the Master Plan's strategies and serve as models for future park redevelopment and investment across the county. The four (4) sites are:

- Linda Pedersen Park
- Ernie Wever Park
- Pioneer Park
- Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Senior Park

*Linda Pedersen Park*

*Ernie Wever Park*

*Pioneer Park*

*Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Senior Park*

# Linda Pedersen Park (Preserve)

Linda Pedersen Park is an existing preserve/ ESL park in Hernando County. It is known for its proximity to the springs and hosting popular County festivals like Swamp Fest. It also ties into the existing blueways trail.

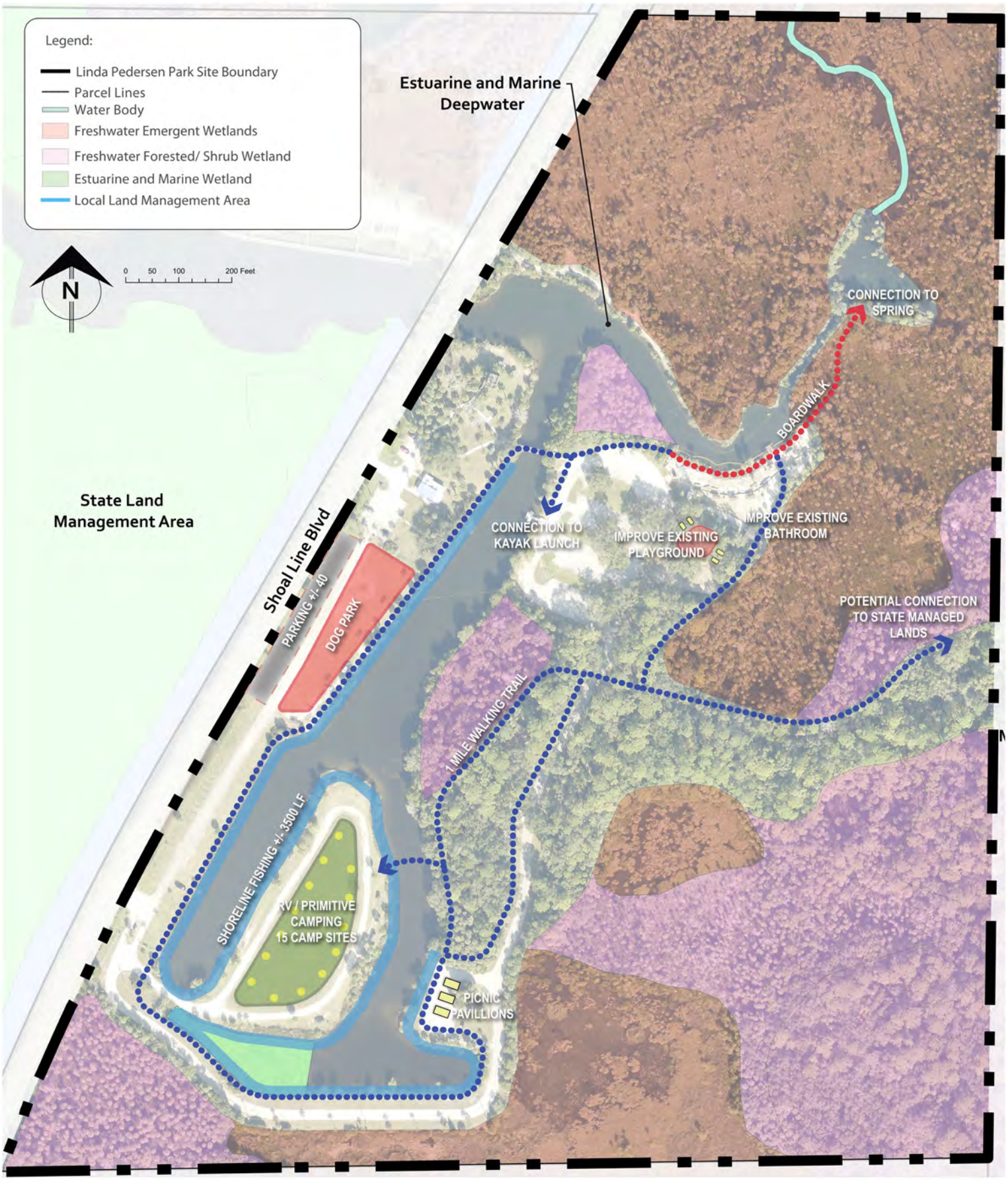
GOALS: To maintain the scenic qualities of this park and enhance the existing facilities while creating programming that increase visitation to the site. Connecting the park access into the larger adjacent preserve and spring systems.

*Boardwalk*

*Primitive Camping*

## Recommendations

- Complete the current boardwalk renovation project and create a destination within the park and community. Extend the boardwalk connection to the springs with interpretive educational signage.
- Improve existing bathroom facilities to accommodate future events and park enhancements.
- Create a safe connection to the existing kayak launch.
- Upgrade park infrastructure, including sidewalks, pavement, and landscaping.
- Consider providing fenced, off-leash dog area in part of the existing overflow grass area on the western side of the park near Shoal Line Blvd.
- Consider adding primitive camping to the peninsula at the south end of the site.
- Create a continuous trail around the entire park facility.
- Create a potential connection to the adjacent eastern state managed lands.
- Consider removing the existing parking at the southeast corner of the site and creating a small picnic pavilion area with waterfront views with a few adjacent parking spots.
- Improve and expand existing playground area.


Legend:
Linda Pedersen Park Site Boundary
Parcel Lines
Water Body
Freshwater Emergent Wetlands
Freshwater Forested/ Shrub Wetland
Estuarine and Marine Wetland
Local Land Management Area
N
0 50 100 200 Feet
Estuarine and Marine Deepwater
State Land Management Area
Shoal Line Blvd
PARKING +/- 40
DOG PARK
CONNECTION TO KAYAK LAUNCH
IMPROVE EXISTING PLAYGROUND
IMPROVE EXISTING BATHROOM
CONNECTION TO SPRING
BOARDWALK
POTENTIAL CONNECTION TO STATE MANAGED LANDS
1 MILE WALKING TRAIL
SHORELINE FISHING +/- 3500 LF
RV / PRIMITIVE CAMPING 15 CAMP SITES
PICNIC PAVILLIONS

# Ernie Wever Park (District Park)

Ernie Wever Park is one of the County's three district parks, and is the largest of the County's Parks. The existing park contains multiple amenities that support active and passive uses for both family groups and organized sports users. Proposed improvements would increase efficiencies, expand usable field time, and provide a wider range of experiences for users.

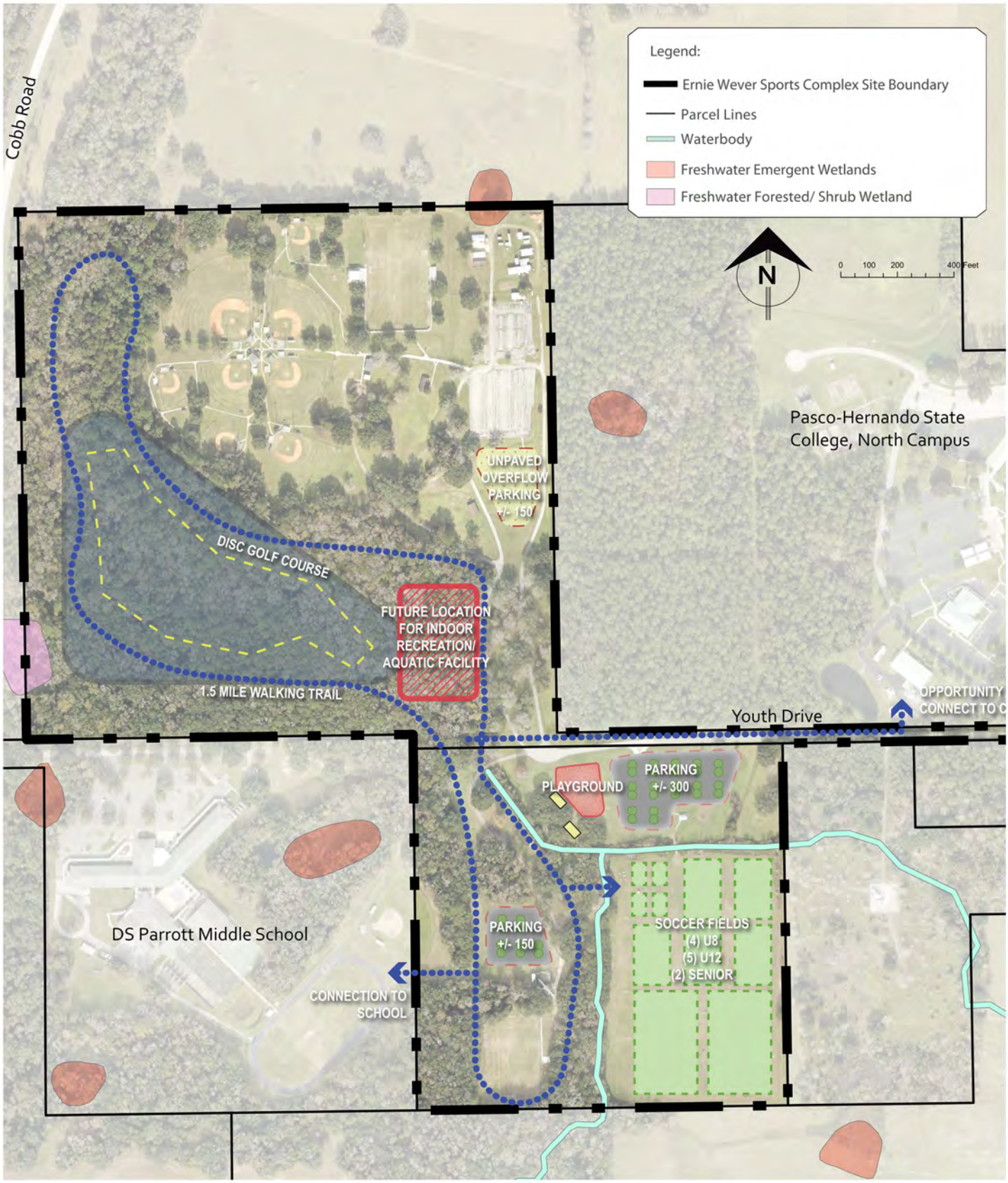
GOALS: To maintain the existing athletic recreational facilities while maximizing their capacity. Creating a connected park facility for visitors and maximizing the existing wooded area with trails and passive recreation.

*Disc Golf*

*Paved Walking Trail*

## Recommendations

- Remove and replace lighting in existing soccer area at southeast corner of the site to increase and maximize field layout.
- Increase parking lot area to the north of the soccer facility and add adjacent playground.
- Consider limbing up existing vegetation to maintain safe sight lines.
- Add new playground at the end of Youth Drive with a few picnic pavilions.
- Consider adding a disc golf course through the existing wooded area.
- Create a looped walking trail to connect the north and south portions of the site. Add potential connections to the Middle School and Hernando State College Campus.
- Renovate existing maintenance facilities and add another garage/ storage shed.
- Remove old dirt storage area near center of site. Relocate if necessary.
- Remove existing basketball court and replace with unpaved overflow parking.


Legend:
Ernie Wever Sports Complex Site Boundary
Parcel Lines
Waterbody
Freshwater Emergent Wetlands
Freshwater Forested/ Shrub Wetland
N
0 100 200 400 Feet
Cobb Road
Pasco-Hernando State College, North Campus
UNPAVED OVERFLOW PARKING +/- 150
DISC GOLF COURSE
FUTURE LOCATION FOR INDOOR RECREATION/ AQUATIC FACILITY
1.5 MILE WALKING TRAIL
Youth Drive
OPPORTUNITY CONNECT TO C
PLAYGROUND
PARKING +/- 300
DS Parrott Middle School
PARKING +/- 150
SOCCER FIELDS (4) U8 (5) U12 (2) SENIOR
CONNECTION TO SCHOOL

# Pioneer Park (Neighborhood Park)

Pioneer Park is an existing 7 acre park located in Spring Hill. This is the County's first skate park (Stewy's Skate Park) which includes ramps, obstacles, half pipes, and covered pavilion. The County recently added a new playground to this park.

GOALS: To celebrate and build upon the existing skateboarding community by integrating a BMX track within the site.

*BMX Track*

*Skate Park Improvements*

## Recommendations

- Renovate and resurface existing skate park.
- Consider expanding the existing skate park to the north.
- Create a continuous walking trail throughout the site.
- Maintain existing buffer between back of adjacent residential and park area.
- Add BMX tracks for various age groups.
- Create gathering/ picnic area centralized to the park and skate/ BMX amenities.
- Add a tot bike path around the exterior of the existing playground and expand the limits of play.

Legend:
Pioneer Park Site Boundary
Parcel Lines
N
0 25 50 100 Feet
Talbot Cir
Pinehurst Dr
Talbot Cir
Talbot Cir
SKATE PARK EXPANSION
WALKING TRAIL
EXISTING SKATE PARK TO BE RENOVATED
PROPOSED RETENTION POND
BMX TRACK
PICNIC PAVILLIONS
EXISTING HALF BASKETBALL COURT
EXISTING RETENTION POND
EXISTING PLAYGROUND
TOT BIKE PATH
Pinehurst Dr
Fairlawn St
Treehaven Dr

# Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Senior Park (Community Park)

Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park is an existing community park in the Spring Hill area and has been a long time anchor to the community.

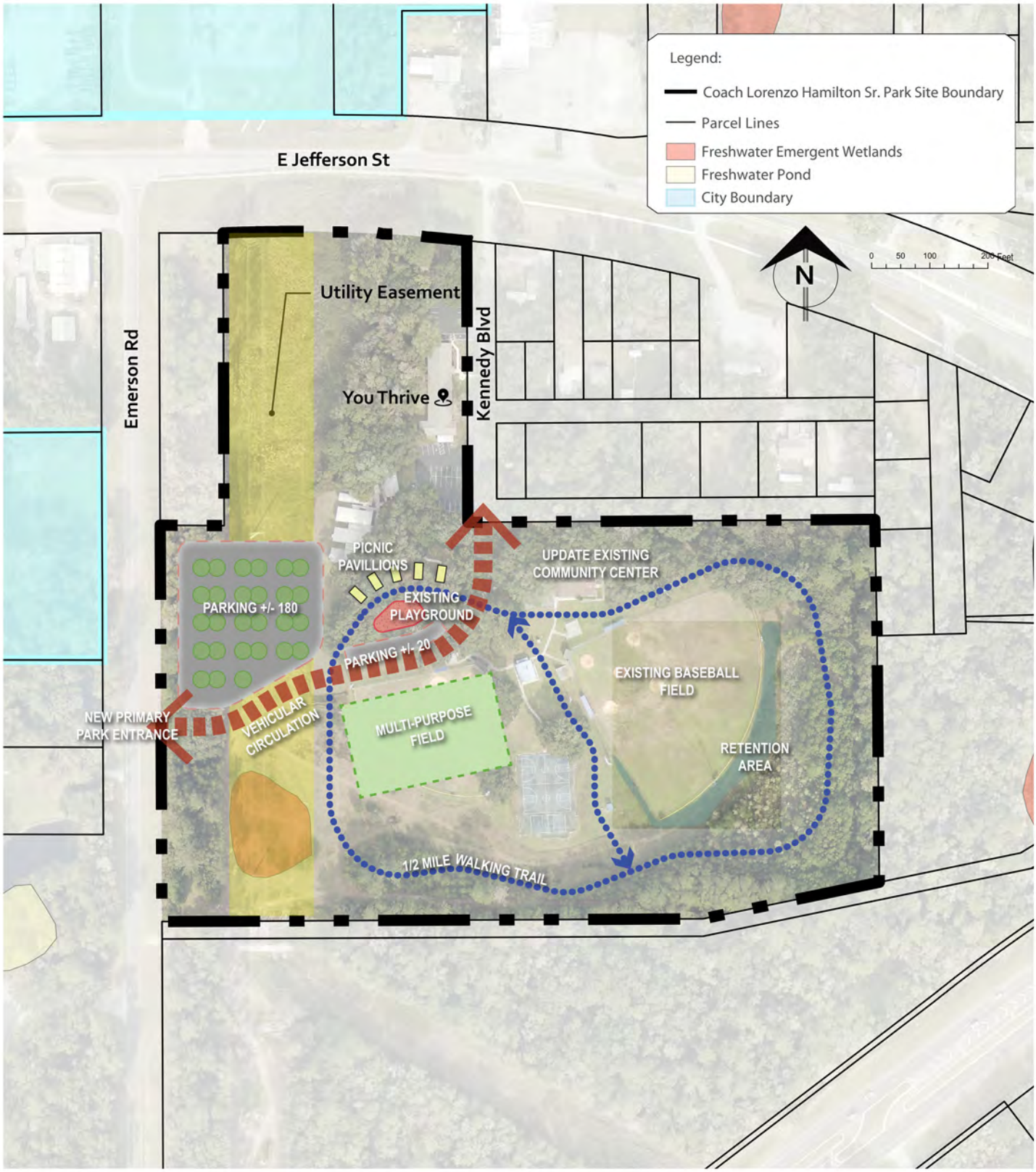
GOALS: To create a safe and inviting park through the improvement of amenities throughout the park to support enjoyment and usership of the space.

*Picnic Pavilion*

*Multi-Purpose Field*

## Recommendations

- Extend Kennedy Blvd. through the site and tie into Emerson Road.
- Keep existing renovated playground and install new picnic pavilions and walking paths around.
- Upgrade the existing community center.
- Remove the western baseball field and replace with a multi-purpose field.
- Resurface existing basketball court.
- Create connected walking trail around the perimeter of the site.
- Create new designated park parking area within the existing utility easement area. (Tree Canopy in Parking Lot in alignment with Utility Restrictions)


Legend:
Coach Lorenzo Hamilton Sr. Park Site Boundary
Parcel Lines
Freshwater Emergent Wetlands
Freshwater Pond
City Boundary
N
0 50 100 200 Feet
E Jefferson St
Emerson Rd
Kennedy Blvd
Utility Easement
You Thrive
PICNIC PAVILLIONS
EXISTING PLAYGROUND
PARKING +/- 180
PARKING +/- 20
UPDATE EXISTING COMMUNITY CENTER
EXISTING BASEBALL FIELD
MULTI-PURPOSE FIELD
RETENTION AREA
NEW PRIMARY PARK ENTRANCE
VEHICULAR CIRCULATION
1/2 MILE WALKING TRAIL

# Strategic Plan

## Overview

The Strategic Plan serves as the action-focused companion to the Hernando County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, translating countywide needs and community priorities into clear, implementable steps. Drawing on extensive public input, staff perspectives, and systemwide assessments, the plan organizes recommendations into a structured framework that identifies what needs to be done, who is responsible, how initiatives can be funded, and when each action should occur. The plan incorporates the full range of operational, capital, maintenance, programming, and partnership strategies the County will need in order to support an expanding population and a growing inventory of parks, trails, and facilities.

The accompanying Strategic Plan matrix includes several key columns: Goals, Objectives/Actions, Timeframe, Action Type, Potential Funding Sources, and Potential Partnerships, to help guide implementation. This format ensures each action is linked to a realistic timeline, identifies whether the action requires capital improvements, policy updates, staffing changes, or operational adjustments, and acknowledges the funding sources and partners most relevant to its success. Recommendations range from short-term policy updates such as developing sponsorship programs and improving ADA compliance, to medium- and long-term capital investments including new parks, expanded trails, enhanced indoor recreation and aquatic facilities, and major lifecycle replacement projects.

## Key Takeaways

- The Strategic Plan includes 11 countywide goals addressing funding sustainability, facility expansion, staffing, programming, safety, engagement, trail connectivity, indoor recreation, maintenance/resilience, equitable access, and sports/eco-tourism.
- Regular updates to the Strategic Plan are essential because funding sources, county priorities, operational needs, and community conditions evolve over time.
- The Strategic Plans emphasize long-term financial sustainability, noting that historic annual funding levels are insufficient to meet the full capital program, and that new financing tools will be necessary to implement the goals and support future service levels.

Organized around eleven broad goals, from increasing financial capacity and expanding amenities to strengthening safety, operations, programming, and geographic equity—the Strategic Plan offers a roadmap that is both comprehensive and practical. Its structure allows Hernando County to prioritize early wins while also laying the foundation for long-term success. Because each objective includes time-frames, funding strategies, and partnerships, the plan is designed to be adaptable, enabling the County to update priorities as conditions evolve, new funding opportunities arise, or community needs shift.

*Figure B41: Strategic Plan Goals and Actions*

| Goal | Objective / Action | Timeframe | Action Type | Potential Funding Sources | Potential Partnerships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Increase consistent funding and financial resources** | | | | | |
| **A** | Hire or contract a grant writer within Dept. to pursue state/federal funding | Short-term | Policy / Staffing | General Fund, Grants (admin) | County Admin., Finance |
| **B** | Reevaluate development of a "Friends of Parks" non-profit support organization | Short-term | Policy / Partnerships | Partnerships, Donations | County Civic Orgs. |
| **C** | Complete a Park Impact Fee Study and Allocation Plan | Short-term | Policy / Finance | Impact Fees | Planning Dept. |
| **D** | Create a Sponsorship & Naming Rights program for parks and facilities | Short-term | Communications / Policy | Sponsorships, General Fund | Tourism Bureau, Local Businesses |
| **E** | Develop a comprehensive fee policy for programs, rentals, and leagues | Short-term | Policy / Finance | General Fund | Finance Dept., County Commission |
| **F** | Establish cost recovery targets by program type and facility | Short-term | Policy / Finance | General Fund | Finance, Parks Board |
| **G** | Update league and rental agreements for consistency and cost recovery alignment | Short-term | Policy / Operations | General Fund, Rental Revenue | Sports Associations |
| **H** | Reinvest event and tournament revenues directly into a Parks Fund for maintenance and lifecycle costs | Medium-term | Policy / Finance | Operational Revenues, Tourism Tax | County Finance, Tourism Dept. |
| **I** | Reevaluate Park Impact Fee with an update study and allocation plan tied to priority | Medium-term | Policy / Finance | Impact Fees | Planning Dept., Public Works |
| **2. Expand and improve parks, facilities, and amenities** | | | | | |
| **A** | Implement top-priority capital projects including park renovations, field upgrades, restrooms | Short-term | Capital | General Fund, Impact Fees, Grants | Public Works, Contractors |
| **B** | Modernize infrastructure (lighting, restrooms, ADA upgrades) at older parks | Short-term | Capital / Maintenance | General Fund, Grants (ADA/Resiliency) | Public Works, ADA Board |
| **C** | Upgrade and add more lighting fixtures for sports fields and courts to new, more efficient LED options with anti-light pollution technology. | Medium-term | Capital | General Fund, Rental Revenue, Impact Fees | Tourism Bureau, Local Sports Leagues |
| **D** | Develop new neighborhood parks; target priority high-growth areas of the County | Medium-term | Acquisition / Capital | Impact Fees, Grants | Planning Dept., Developers |
| **E** | Add boat/kayak ramps at coastal and inland locations | Medium-term | Capital | FWC Grants, Impact Fees | FDEP, FWC, Tourism |
| **F** | Add additional soccer fields and renovate existing diamonds to tournament-level | Medium-term | Capital | Impact Fees, Grants | Tourism Bureau, Local Sports Leagues |
| **G** | Study the converting of multi-use field to lighted synthetic-turf to expand use capacity | Medium-term | Capital | Impact Fees, Grants | Tourism Bureau, Local Sports Leagues, Schools |

*Figure B41: Strategic Plan Goals and Actions*

| Goal | Objective / Action | Timeframe | Action Type | Potential Funding Sources | Potential Partnerships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3. Balance and grow adequate staffing and resources to meet needs** | | | | | |
| **A** | Conduct staffing ratio level assessment for parks and maintenance | Short-term | Policy / Operations | General Fund | HR, County Admin |
| **B** | Add recreation programmer and administrative staff to support program expansion | Short-term | Staffing | General Fund | HR Dept. |
| **C** | Add new maintenance positions | Short-term | Staffing / Operations | General Fund, Impact Fees (admin) | HR, Public Works |
| **D** | Conduct Athletic Field Use Policy and capacity analysis for scheduling equity | Short-term | Policy / Planning | General Fund | Youth Leagues, Sports Council |
| **E** | Develop annual staff training and certification plan (safety, first aid, equipment, CPSI) | Medium-term | Programming / Operations | General Fund, Training Grants | Local Colleges, Safety Council |
| **4. Expand development of recreation programming** | | | | | |
| **A** | Develop a formal Programming Philosophy to guide recreation program decisions and | Short-term | Policy / Planning | General Fund | Parks Board, Recreation Staff |
| **B** | Create a 5-Year Program Plan outlining program types, delivery models, and | Short-term | Planning / Policy | General Fund, Grants | Schools, Senior Services, Cultural |
| **C** | Develop inclusive programs for multigenerational and ethnically diverse | Short-term | Programming / Policy | Grants, General Fund | Cultural & Hispanic Organizations |
| **D** | Develop Program Metrics System to track participation, fill rates, and cost recovery | Short-term | Technology / Policy | General Fund, Software Grants | IT Dept., NRPA Benchmarking |
| **E** | Create Program/Special Event Evaluation Form and feedback loop | Short-term | Technology / Policy | General Fund | Participants, Staff |
| **F** | Expand program offerings in underrepresented areas: Cultural Arts, Teens, | Medium-term | Programming | General Fund, Grants, | Arts Council, YMCA, Nonprofits, Schools |
| **G** | Introduce new recreation trends such as Pickleball, Kayaking, Hiking, Fitness/Wellness, | Medium-term | Programming / Capital | Grants (LWCF, FRDAP), | Sports Clubs, Tourism Bureau |
| **H** | Use RecTrac data and social media analytics to target specific age/demographic groups | Medium-term | Technology / Communications | General Fund | IT Dept., Marketing Consultants |
| **I** | Implement Performance Dashboards for program participation, demographics, and | Medium-term | Technology | General Fund | IT Dept., GIS |
| **5. Improve safety and security in parks and preserves** | | | | | |
| **A** | Evaluate and install self-locking gates, lighting, and security cameras in high-use parks | Short-term | Capital / Technology | General Fund, FEMA Mitigation | Sheriff's Office, IT Dept. |
| **B** | Create volunteer "Park Watch" or Adopt-a-Park safety program | Short-term | Programming / Policy | Volunteer Program | Neighborhood Groups, Rotary |
| **C** | Contract or hire park rangers / security patrol | Medium-term | Staffing | General Fund | Sheriff's Office |
| **D** | Conduct CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) review of major parks | Medium-term | Policy / Planning | Grants (DOJ, FEMA) | Public Safety, Planning |

*Figure B41: Strategic Plan Goals and Actions*

| Goal | Objective / Action | Timeframe | Action Type | Potential Funding Sources | Potential Partnerships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6. Enhance community engagement, access, and transparency** | | | | | |
| **A** | Launch online community engagement and reporting platform | Short-term | Communications / Technology | General Fund | IT Dept., PIO |
| **B** | Develop bilingual park signage and print materials | Short-term | Communications | General Fund, Sponsorships | Community Outreach Partners |
| **C** | Publish an annual "State of Parks & Recreation" report | Short-term | Communications / Policy | General Fund | Parks Board |
| **D** | Coordinate youth/senior programming through schools and nonprofits | Medium-term | Programming | Partnerships, Grants | Schools, YMCA, Health Dept. |
| **7. Expand trails and connectivity countywide** | | | | | |
| **A** | Develop trailheads, signage, and wayfinding standards | Short-term | Planning / Capital | Grants, Sponsorships | Tourism, MPO |
| **B** | Complete Good Neighbor Trail and Suncoast Parkway Trail linkages | Medium-term | Capital | FDOT SUN Trail Grant, Impact Fees | FDOT, MPO |
| **C** | Acquire trail easements for connectivity between parks | Medium-term | Acquisition | Impact Fees, Grants | Public Works, Private Landowners |
| **D** | Expand blueway access (kayak/paddle routes) consistent with State Paddling Trail | Long-term | Capital / Acquisition | FDEP, FWC Grants | FDEP, FWC, Tourism |
| **8. Enhance indoor recreation and aquatic opportunities** | | | | | |
| **A** | Develop feasibility study and site selection for indoor aquatic center | Short-term | Planning / Capital | General Fund, Impact Fees | Schools, Community Nonprofits |
| **B** | Develop feasibility study and site selection for a recreation center | Short-term | Planning / Capital | General Fund, Impact Fees | Schools, Community Nonprofits |
| **C** | Evaluate opportunities to add indoor gym and wellness space to existing parks | Medium-term | Capital | Impact Fees, Grants | Private Developers |
| **D** | Construct new indoor aquatic center | Long-term | Capital | Impact Fees, Grants, Partnerships | Schools, Health Dept., YMCA |
| **E** | Construct new multiuse recreation center | Long-term | Capital | Impact Fees, Grants, Partnerships | Schools, Health Dept., YMCA |

*Figure B41: Strategic Plan Goals and Actions*

| Goal | Objective / Action | Timeframe | Action Type | Potential Funding Sources | Potential Partnerships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **9. Enhance maintenance, resilience, and sustainability** | | | | | |
| **A** | Prioritize replacement or repair of aging playgrounds, courts, shelters while incorporating annual conditional assessments and re-prioritization of lifecycle replacement needs | Continue | Capital / Maintenance | General Fund, Grants | Public Works |
| **B** | Identify and partner with volunteer groups to encourage maintenance of existing parks and facilities. | Continue | Capital / Maintenance | General Fund, Grants | Community Groups |
| **C** | Develop a deferred maintenance and lifecycle replacement cost dashboard for countywide and public publication and update annually | Short-term | Technology / Capital | Grants, Operational Funds | Utilities, Sustainability Partners |
| **D** | Implement energy and water efficiency upgrades (LEDs, irrigation tech) | Short-term | Technology / Capital | Grants, Operational Funds | Utilities, Sustainability Partners |
| **E** | Establish and integrate low-impact design practices into new park and facility projects | Medium-term | Policy / Capital | FDEP Grants, Impact Fees | Utilities Dept., FDEP |
| **F** | Establish annual maintenance and storm recovery reserve fund | Medium-term | Policy / Finance | General Fund, FEMA Reimbursement | Emergency Mgmt., Finance |
| **10. Enhance access and geographic balance to recreation and open space opportunities** | | | | | |
| **A** | Use Access LOS to target underserved areas of county with new/expansion of facilities | Short-term | Planning / Policy | General Fund | Planning Dept., GIS |
| **B** | Update and enhance design standards to address universal/ADA, maintenance, and branding needs | Short-term | Policy | General Fund | ADA Board, Public Works |
| **C** | Acquire land for new parks in underserved areas; priorities in high growth areas of the County | Medium-term | Acquisition | Impact Fees, Grants | Developers, Land Trusts, Planning Dept. |
| **11. Promote sports and eco-tourism countywide** | | | | | |
| **A** | Improve quality of existing sports fields to enhance opportunities to host tournaments and enhance countywide sports tourism goals | Short-term | Programming / Partnerships | Tourism Development Tax | Tourism Bureau, Local Sports Leagues |
| **B** | Develop joint comprehensive marketing plan for sports, recreation, programs and events | Short-term | Communications | General Fund, Sponsorships | Tourism Bureau, Media Partners, |
| **C** | Develop strategies for joint events focused on the Natural Coast and eco-tourism (fishing tournaments, kayaking, guided tours) | Short-term | Programming / Partnerships | Tourism Development Tax | Tourism Bureau, Local Sports Leagues |
| **D** | Establish annual partner coordination meeting with youth sports leagues and community orgs | Short-term | Partnerships / Programming | General Fund | Youth Leagues, Schools |
| **E** | Partner with FDEP and Withlacoochee SF for ecological and recreation programs | Medium-term | Programming / Partnerships | Grants, Partnerships | FDEP, State Parks |
| **F** | Expand tournament hosting capacity at Anderson Snow Park and Ernie Wever Park | Long-term | Capital / Programming | Impact Fees, Sponsorships | Sports Councils, Tourism Bureau |

## Strategic Plan Updating

The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, one that evolves alongside Hernando County's changing conditions, priorities, and opportunities. Because parks and recreation needs are influenced by factors such as population growth, development patterns, economic shifts, funding availability, and community expectations, it is essential for the County to review and update the plan on a regular basis. Annual or biannual check-ins allow staff and leadership to assess progress on objectives, evaluate the effectiveness of completed actions, and adjust timelines or responsibilities as new information becomes available. This process ensures the plan remains accurate, actionable, and aligned with the County's operational capacity and fiscal realities. The process of sharing and updating the Strategic Plan should be documented by the Department as part of a review process as well.

Regular updates also enable the County to respond proactively to external forces such as new grant opportunities, legislative changes, environmental events, or shifts in state and federal funding priorities. By maintaining flexibility and revisiting the plan's recommendations, timeframes, and funding strategies, Hernando County can remain positioned to pursue competitive grants, leverage strategic partnerships, and make informed decisions about capital investments and staffing. Consistent review not only strengthens accountability and transparency but also reinforces the plan's purpose: to guide long-term success while allowing for adaptation as community needs and opportunities evolve.

## Summary

Together, the Strategic Plan and its implementation matrix create a flexible, transparent framework for managing growth, reinvesting in aging parks, and delivering high-quality recreation services. By linking each objective to specific actions, funding paths, and partnerships, the plan provides County staff, elected officials, partner organizations, and the public with a shared tool for tracking progress and aligning resources over time. The tiered timeframes: short-term (1–5 years), medium-term (6–10 years), and long-term (10+ years); ensure that both urgent needs and future expansions remain coordinated and strategically sequenced.

Ultimately, this Strategic Plan positions Hernando County to maintain a high-performing parks and recreation system that grows with its residents, supports a more resilient and accessible environment, and elevates quality of life throughout the community. As priorities evolve and the population continues to increase, the plan is intended to be reviewed, refined, and updated regularly to ensure that the County remains responsive, effective, and ready to meet changing needs.